

# The Poetry Collection of Thomas Hardy - Volume 2

Thomas Hardy

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## PREFACE

In collecting the following poems I have to thank the editors and proprietors of the periodicals in which certain of them have appeared for permission to reclaim them.

Now that the miscellany is brought together, some lack of concord in pieces written at widely severed dates, and in contrasting moods and circumstances, will be obvious enough. This I cannot help, but the sense of disconnection, particularly in respect of those lyrics penned in the first person, will be immaterial when it is borne in mind that they are to be regarded, in the main, as dramatic monologues by different characters.

As a whole they will, I hope, take the reader forward, even if not far, rather than backward. I should add that some lines in the early-dated poems have been rewritten, though they have been left substantially unchanged.

T. H.

September 1909.

## THE REVISITATION

As I lay awake at night-time  
In an ancient country barrack known to ancient cannoneers,  
And recalled the hopes that heralded each seeming brave and bright time  
Of my primal purple years,

Much it haunted me that, nigh there,  
I had borne my bitterest loss — when One who went, came not again;  
In a joyless hour of discord, in a joyless-hued July there -  
A July just such as then.

And as thus I brooded longer,  
With my faint eyes on the feeble square of wan-lit window frame,  
A quick conviction sprung within me, grew, and grew yet stronger,  
That the month-night was the same,

Too, as that which saw her leave me  
On the rugged ridge of Waterstone, the peewits plaining round;  
And a lapsing twenty years had ruled that — as it were to grieve me -  
I should near the once-loved ground.

Though but now a war-worn stranger  
Chance had quartered here, I rose up and descended to the yard.  
All was soundless, save the troopers' horses tossing at the manger,  
And the sentry keeping guard.

Through the gateway I betook me  
Down the High Street and beyond the lamps, across the battered bridge,  
Till the country darkness clasped me and the friendly shine forsook me,  
And I bore towards the Ridge,

With a dim unowned emotion  
Saying softly: "Small my reason, now at midnight, to be here . . .  
Yet a sleepless swain of fifty with a brief romantic notion  
May retrace a track so dear."

Thus I walked with thoughts half-uttered  
Up the lane I knew so well, the grey, gaunt, lonely Lane of Slyre;  
And at whiles behind me, far at sea, a sullen thunder muttered  
As I mounted high and higher.

Till, the upper roadway quitting,  
I adventured on the open drouthy downland thinly grassed,  
While the sly white scuts of conies flashed before me, earthward flitting,  
And an arid wind went past.

Round about me bulged the barrows  
As before, in antique silence — immemorial funeral piles -  
Where the sleek herds trampled daily the remains of flint-tipt arrows  
Mid the thyme and chamomiles;

And the Sarsen stone there, dateless,  
On whose breast we had sat and told the zephyrs many a tender vow,  
Held the heat of yester sun, as sank thereon one fated mateless  
From those far fond hours till now.

Maybe flustered by my presence  
Rose the peewits, just as all those years back, wailing soft and loud,  
And revealing their pale pinions like a fitful phosphorescence  
Up against the cope of cloud,

Where their dolesome exclamations  
Seemed the voicings of the self-same throats I had heard when life was  
green,  
Though since that day uncounted frail forgotten generations  
Of their kind had flecked the scene. -

And so, living long and longer  
In a past that lived no more, my eyes discerned there, suddenly,  
That a figure broke the skyline — first in vague contour, then stronger,  
And was crossing near to me.

Some long-missed familiar gesture,  
Something wonted, struck me in the figure's pause to list and heed,  
Till I fancied from its handling of its loosely wrapping vesture  
That it might be She indeed.

'Twas not reasonless: below there  
In the vale, had been her home; the nook might hold her even yet,  
And the downlands were her father's fief; she still might come and go there;

-

So I rose, and said, "Agnette!"



With a little leap, half-frightened,  
She withdrew some steps; then letting intuition smother fear  
In a place so long-accustomed, and as one whom thought enlightened,  
She replied: "What — THAT voice? — here!"

"Yes, Agnette! — And did the occasion  
Of our marching hither make you think I MIGHT walk where we two — '  
"O, I often come," she murmured with a moment's coy evasion,  
"('Tis not far), — and — think of you."

Then I took her hand, and led her  
To the ancient people's stone whereon I had sat. There now sat we;  
And together talked, until the first reluctant shyness fled her,  
And she spoke confidently.

"It is JUST as ere we parted!"  
Said she, brimming high with joy. — "And when, then, came you here, and why?"  
" — Dear, I could not sleep for thinking of our trystings when twin-hearted."  
She responded, "Nor could I.

"There are few things I would rather  
Than be wandering at this spirit-hour — lone-lived, my kindred dead -  
On this wold of well-known feature I inherit from my father:  
Night or day, I have no dread . . .

"O I wonder, wonder whether  
Any heartstring bore a signal-thrill between us twain or no? -  
Some such influence can, at times, they say, draw severed souls together."  
I said, "Dear, we'll dream it so."

Each one's hand the other's grasping,  
And a mutual forgiveness won, we sank to silent thought,  
A large content in us that seemed our rended lives reclasping,  
And contracting years to nought.

Till I, maybe overweary  
From the lateness, and a wayfaring so full of strain and stress  
For one no longer buoyant, to a peak so steep and eery,  
Sank to slow unconsciousness . . .

How long I slept I knew not,  
But the brief warm summer night had slid when, to my swift surprise,  
A red upedging sun, of glory chambered mortals view not,  
Was blazing on my eyes,

From the Milton Woods to Dole-Hill  
All the spacious landscape lighting, and around about my feet  
Flinging tall thin tapering shadows from the meanest mound and mole-hill,  
And on trails the ewes had beat.

She was sitting still beside me,  
Dozing likewise; and I turned to her, to take her hanging hand;  
When, the more regarding, that which like a spectre shook and tried me  
In her image then I scanned;

That which Time's transforming chisel  
Had been tooling night and day for twenty years, and tooled too well,  
In its rendering of crease where curve was, where was raven, grizzle -  
Pits, where peonies once did dwell.

She had wakened, and perceiving  
(I surmise) my sigh and shock, my quite involuntary dismay,  
Up she started, and — her wasted figure all throughout it heaving -  
Said, "Ah, yes: I am THUS by day!

"Can you really wince and wonder  
That the sunlight should reveal you such a thing of skin and bone,  
As if unaware a Death's-head must of need lie not far under  
Flesh whose years out-count your own?

"Yes: that movement was a warning  
Of the worth of man's devotion! — Yes, Sir, I am OLD," said she,  
"And the thing which should increase love turns it quickly into scorning -  
And your new-won heart from me!"

Then she went, ere I could call her,  
With the too proud temper ruling that had parted us before,  
And I saw her form descend the slopes, and smaller grow and smaller,  
Till I caught its course no more . . .

True; I might have dogged her downward;  
- But it MAY be (though I know not) that this trick on us of Time  
Disconcerted and confused me. — Soon I bent my footsteps townward,  
Like to one who had watched a crime.

Well I knew my native weakness,  
Well I know it still. I cherished her reproach like physic-wine,  
For I saw in that emaciate shape of bitterness and bleakness  
A nobler soul than mine.

Did I not return, then, ever? -  
Did we meet again? — mend all? — Alas, what greyhead perseveres! -  
Soon I got the Route elsewhither. — Since that hour I have seen her never:  
Love is lame at fifty years.

# A TRAMPWOMAN'S TRAGEDY (182-)

## I

From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,  
The livelong day,  
We beat afoot the northward way  
We had travelled times before.  
The sun-blaze burning on our backs,  
Our shoulders sticking to our packs,  
By fosseway, fields, and turnpike tracks  
We skirted sad Sedge-Moor.

## II

Full twenty miles we jaunted on,  
We jaunted on, -  
My fancy-man, and jeering John,  
And Mother Lee, and I.  
And, as the sun drew down to west,  
We climbed the toilsome Poldon crest,  
And saw, of landskip sights the best,  
The inn that beamed thereby.

## III

For months we had padded side by side,  
Ay, side by side  
Through the Great Forest, Blackmoor wide,  
And where the Parret ran.  
We'd faced the gusts on Mendip ridge,  
Had crossed the Yeo unhelped by bridge,  
Been stung by every Marshwood midge,  
I and my fancy-man.

## IV

Lone inns we loved, my man and I,  
My man and I;  
"King's Stag," "Windwhistle" high and dry,  
"The Horse" on Hintock Green,  
The cosy house at Wynyard's Gap,  
"The Hut" renowned on Bredy Knap,  
And many another wayside tap  
Where folk might sit unseen.

## V

Now as we trudged — O deadly day,  
O deadly day! -  
I teased my fancy-man in play  
And wanton idleness.  
I walked alongside jeering John,  
I laid his hand my waist upon;  
I would not bend my glances on  
My lover's dark distress.

## VI

Thus Poldon top at last we won,  
At last we won,  
And gained the inn at sink of sun  
Far-famed as "Marshal's Elm."  
Beneath us figured tor and lea,  
From Mendip to the western sea -  
I doubt if finer sight there be  
Within this royal realm.

## VII

Inside the settle all a-row -  
All four a-row  
We sat, I next to John, to show  
That he had wooed and won.  
And then he took me on his knee,  
And swore it was his turn to be  
My favoured mate, and Mother Lee  
Passed to my former one.

## VIII

Then in a voice I had never heard,  
I had never heard,  
My only Love to me: "One word,  
My lady, if you please!  
Whose is the child you are like to bear? -  
HIS? After all my months o' care?"  
God knows 'twas not! But, O despair!  
I nodded — still to tease.

## **IX**

Then up he sprung, and with his knife -  
And with his knife  
He let out jeering Johnny's life,  
Yes; there, at set of sun.  
The slant ray through the window nigh  
Gilded John's blood and glazing eye,  
Ere scarcely Mother Lee and I  
Knew that the deed was done.

## **X**

The taverns tell the gloomy tale,  
The gloomy tale,  
How that at Ivel-chester jail  
My Love, my sweetheart swung;  
Though stained till now by no misdeed  
Save one horse ta'en in time o' need;  
(Blue Jimmy stole right many a steed  
Ere his last fling he flung.)

## **XI**

Thereaft I walked the world alone,  
Alone, alone!  
On his death-day I gave my groan  
And dropt his dead-born child.  
'Twas nigh the jail, beneath a tree,  
None tending me; for Mother Lee  
Had died at Glaston, leaving me  
Unfriended on the wild.

## XII

And in the night as I lay weak,  
As I lay weak,  
The leaves a-falling on my cheek,  
The red moon low declined -  
The ghost of him I'd die to kiss  
Rose up and said: "Ah, tell me this!  
Was the child mine, or was it his?  
Speak, that I rest may find!"

## XIII

O doubt not but I told him then,  
I told him then,  
That I had kept me from all men  
Since we joined lips and swore.  
Whereat he smiled, and thinned away  
As the wind stirred to call up day . . .  
- 'Tis past! And here alone I stray  
Haunting the Western Moor.

NOTES. — "Windwhistle" (Stanza iv.). The highness and dryness of Windwhistle Inn was impressed upon the writer two or three years ago, when, after climbing on a hot afternoon to the beautiful spot near which it stands and entering the inn for tea, he was informed by the landlady that none could be had, unless he would fetch water from a valley half a mile off, the house containing not a drop, owing to its situation. However, a tantalising row of full barrels behind her back testified to a wetness of a certain sort, which was not at that time desired.

"Marshal's Elm" (Stanza vi.) so picturesquely situated, is no longer an inn, though the house, or part of it, still remains. It used to exhibit a fine old swinging sign.

"Blue Jimmy" (Stanza x.) was a notorious horse-stealer of Wessex in those days, who appropriated more than a hundred horses before he was caught, among others one belonging to a neighbour of the writer's grandfather. He was hanged at the now demolished Ivel-chester or Ilchester jail above mentioned — that building formerly of so many sinister associations in the minds of the local peasantry, and the continual haunt of fever, which at last led to its condemnation. Its site is now an innocent-looking green meadow.

April 1902.

# THE TWO ROSALINDS

## I

The dubious daylight ended,  
And I walked the Town alone, unminding whither bound and why,  
As from each gaunt street and gaping square a mist of light ascended  
And dispersed upon the sky.

## II

Files of evanescent faces  
Passed each other without heeding, in their travail, teen, or joy,  
Some in void unvisioned listlessness inwrought with pallid traces  
Of keen penury's annoy.

## III

Nebulous flames in crystal cages  
Leered as if with discontent at city movement, murk, and grime,  
And as waiting some procession of great ghosts from bygone ages  
To exalt the ignoble time.

## IV

In a colonnade high-lighted,  
By a thoroughfare where stern utilitarian traffic dinned,  
On a red and white emblazonment of players and parts, I sighted  
The name of "Rosalind,"

## V

And her famous mates of "Arden,"  
Who observed no stricter customs than "the seasons' difference" bade,  
Who lived with running brooks for books in Nature's wildwood garden,  
And called idleness their trade . . .

## VI

Now the poster stirred an ember  
Still remaining from my arduous of some forty years before,  
When the selfsame portal on an eve it thrilled me to remember  
A like announcement bore;

## VII

And expectantly I had entered,  
And had first beheld in human mould a Rosalind woo and plead,  
On whose transcendent figuring my speedy soul had centred  
As it had been she indeed . . .

### VIII

So; all other plans discarding,  
I resolved on entrance, bent on seeing what I once had seen,  
And approached the gangway of my earlier knowledge, disregarding  
The tract of time between.

### IX

"The words, sir?" cried a creature  
Hovering mid the shine and shade as 'twixt the live world and the tomb;  
But the well-known numbers needed not for me a text or teacher  
To revive and re-illuminate.

### X

Then the play . . . But how unfitted  
Was THIS Rosalind! — a mammet quite to me, in memories nurst,  
And with chilling disappointment soon I sought the street I had quitted,  
To re-ponder on the first.

### XI

The hag still hawked, — I met her  
Just without the colonnade. "So you don't like her, sir?" said she.  
"Ah — I was once that Rosalind! — I acted her — none better -  
Yes — in eighteen sixty-three.

### XII

"Thus I won Orlando to me  
In my then triumphant days when I had charm and maidenhood,  
Now some forty years ago. — I used to say, COME WOO ME, WOO ME!"  
And she struck the attitude.



## XIII

It was when I had gone there nightly;  
And the voice — though raucous now — was yet the old one. — Clear as noon  
My Rosalind was here . . . Thereon the band withinside lightly  
Beat up a merry tune.

## A SUNDAY MORNING TRAGEDY (circa 186-)

I bore a daughter flower-fair,  
In Pydel Vale, alas for me;  
I joyed to mother one so rare,  
But dead and gone I now would be.

Men looked and loved her as she grew,  
And she was won, alas for me;  
She told me nothing, but I knew,  
And saw that sorrow was to be.

I knew that one had made her thrall,  
A thrall to him, alas for me;  
And then, at last, she told me all,  
And wondered what her end would be.

She owned that she had loved too well,  
Had loved too well, unhappy she,  
And bore a secret time would tell,  
Though in her shroud she'd sooner be.

I plodded to her sweetheart's door  
In Pydel Vale, alas for me:  
I pleaded with him, pleaded sore,  
To save her from her misery.

He frowned, and swore he could not wed,  
Seven times he swore it could not be;  
"Poverty's worse than shame," he said,  
Till all my hope went out of me.

"I've packed my traps to sail the main" -  
Roughly he spake, alas did he -  
"Wessex beholds me not again,  
'Tis worse than any jail would be!"

- There was a shepherd whom I knew,  
A subtle man, alas for me:  
I sought him all the pastures through,  
Though better I had ceased to be.

I traced him by his lantern light,  
And gave him hint, alas for me,  
Of how she found her in the plight  
That is so scorned in Christendie.

“Is there an herb . . . ?” I asked. “Or none?”  
Yes, thus I asked him desperately.

“ — There is,” he said; “a certain one . . . “  
Would he had sworn that none knew he!

“To-morrow I will walk your way,”  
He hinted low, alas for me. -  
Fieldwards I gazed throughout next day;  
Now fields I never more would see!

The sunset-shine, as curfew strook,  
As curfew strook beyond the lea,  
Lit his white smock and gleaming crook,  
While slowly he drew near to me.

He pulled from underneath his smock  
The herb I sought, my curse to be -  
“At times I use it in my flock,”  
He said, and hope waxed strong in me.

“‘Tis meant to balk ill-motherings” -  
(Ill-motherings! Why should they be?) -  
“If not, would God have sent such things?”  
So spoke the shepherd unto me.

That night I watched the poppling brew,  
With bended back and hand on knee:  
I stirred it till the dawnlight grew,  
And the wind whiffled wailfully.

“This scandal shall be slain,” said I,  
“That lours upon her innocency:  
I’ll give all whispering tongues the lie;” -  
But worse than whispers was to be.

“Here’s physic for untimely fruit,”  
I said to her, alas for me,  
Early that morn in fond salute;  
And in my grave I now would be.

- Next Sunday came, with sweet church chimes  
In Pydel Vale, alas for me:  
I went into her room betimes;  
No more may such a Sunday be!

“Mother, instead of rescue nigh,”  
She faintly breathed, alas for me,  
“I feel as I were like to die,  
And underground soon, soon should be.”

From church that noon the people walked  
In twos and threes, alas for me,  
Showed their new raiment — smiled and talked,  
Though sackcloth-clad I longed to be.

Came to my door her lover’s friends,  
And cheerly cried, alas for me,  
“Right glad are we he makes amends,  
For never a sweeter bride can be.”

My mouth dried, as ‘twere scorched within,  
Dried at their words, alas for me:  
More and more neighbours crowded in,  
(O why should mothers ever be!)

“Ha-ha! Such well-kept news!” laughed they,  
Yes — so they laughed, alas for me.  
“Whose banns were called in church to-day?” -  
Christ, how I wished my soul could flee!

“Where is she? O the stealthy miss,”  
Still bantered they, alas for me,  
“To keep a wedding close as this . . .”  
Ay, Fortune worked thus wantonly!

“But you are pale — you did not know?”  
They archly asked, alas for me,  
I stammered, “Yes — some days-ago,”  
While coffined clay I wished to be.

“‘Twas done to please her, we surmise?”  
(They spoke quite lightly in their glee)  
“Done by him as a fond surprise?”  
I thought their words would madden me.

Her lover entered. “Where’s my bird? -  
My bird — my flower — my picotee?  
First time of asking, soon the third!”  
Ah, in my grave I well may be.

To me he whispered: “Since your call — ”  
So spoke he then, alas for me -  
“I’ve felt for her, and righted all.”  
- I think of it to agony.

“She’s faint to-day — tired — nothing more — ”  
Thus did I lie, alas for me . . .  
I called her at her chamber door  
As one who scarce had strength to be.  
No voice replied. I went within -  
O women! scourged the worst are we . . .  
I shrieked. The others hastened in  
And saw the stroke there dealt on me.  
There she lay — silent, breathless, dead,  
Stone dead she lay — wronged, sinless she! -  
Ghost-white the cheeks once rosy-red:  
Death had took her. Death took not me.  
I kissed her cold face and hair,  
I kissed her corpse — the bride to be! -  
My punishment I cannot bear,  
But pray God NOT to pity me.  
January 1904.

## THE HOUSE OF HOSPITALITIES

Here we broached the Christmas barrel,  
Pushed up the charred log-ends;  
Here we sang the Christmas carol,  
And called in friends.  
Time has tired me since we met here  
When the folk now dead were young,  
Since the viands were outset here  
And quaint songs sung.  
And the worm has bored the viol  
That used to lead the tune,  
Rust eaten out the dial  
That struck night’s noon.  
Now no Christmas brings in neighbours,  
And the New Year comes unlit;  
Where we sang the mole now labours,  
And spiders knit.  
Yet at midnight if here walking,  
When the moon sheets wall and tree,  
I see forms of old time talking,  
Who smile on me.

## BEREFT

In the black winter morning  
No light will be struck near my eyes  
While the clock in the stairway is warning  
For five, when he used to rise.  
Leave the door unbarred,  
The clock unwound,  
Make my lone bed hard -  
Would 'twere underground!

When the summer dawns clearly,  
And the appletree-tops seem alight,  
Who will undraw the curtain and cheerly  
Call out that the morning is bright?

When I tarry at market  
No form will cross Durnover Lea  
In the gathering darkness, to hark at  
Grey's Bridge for the pit-pat o' me.

When the supper crock's steaming,  
And the time is the time of his tread,  
I shall sit by the fire and wait dreaming  
In a silence as of the dead.  
Leave the door unbarred,  
The clock unwound,  
Make my lone bed hard -  
Would 'twere underground!

1901

## JOHN AND JANE

### I

He sees the world as a boisterous place  
Where all things bear a laughing face,  
And humorous scenes go hourly on,  
Does John.

## **II**

They find the world a pleasant place  
Where all is ecstasy and grace,  
Where a light has risen that cannot wane,  
Do John and Jane.

## **III**

They see as a palace their cottage-place,  
Containing a pearl of the human race,  
A hero, maybe, hereafter styled,  
Do John and Jane with a baby-child.

## **IV**

They rate the world as a gruesome place,  
Where fair looks fade to a skull's grimace, -  
As a pilgrimage they would fain get done -  
Do John and Jane with their worthless son.

# **THE CURATE'S KINDNESS A WORKHOUSE IRONY**

## **I**

I thought they'd be strangers aroun' me,  
But she's to be there!  
Let me jump out o' waggon and go back and drown me  
At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir.

## **II**

I thought: "Well, I've come to the Union -  
The workhouse at last -  
After honest hard work all the week, and Communion  
O' Zundays, these fifty years past.

### III

“‘Tis hard; but,” I thought, “never mind it:  
There’s gain in the end:  
And when I get used to the place I shall find it  
A home, and may find there a friend.

### IV

“Life there will be better than t’other.  
For peace is assured.  
THE MEN IN ONE WING AND THEIR WIVES IN ANOTHER  
Is strictly the rule of the Board.”

### V

Just then one young Pa’son arriving  
Steps up out of breath  
To the side o’ the waggon wherein we were driving  
To Union; and calls out and saith:

#### VI

“Old folks, that harsh order is altered,  
Be not sick of heart!  
The Guardians they pooched and they pished and they paltered  
When urged not to keep you apart.

#### VII

“‘It is wrong,’ I maintained, ‘to divide them,  
Near forty years wed.’  
‘Very well, sir. We promise, then, they shall abide them  
In one wing together,’ they said.”

#### VIII

Then I sank — knew ‘twas quite a foredone thing  
That misery should be  
To the end! . . . To get freed of her there was the one thing  
Had made the change welcome to me.

### IX

To go there was ending but badly;  
’Twas shame and ‘twas pain;  
“But anyhow,” thought I, “thereby I shall gladly  
Get free of this forty years’ chain.”

## X

I thought they'd be strangers aroun' me,  
But she's to be there!  
Let me jump out o' waggon and go back and drown me  
At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir.

## THE FLIRT'S TRAGEDY (17 — )

Here alone by the logs in my chamber,  
Deserted, decrepit -  
Spent flames limning ghosts on the wainscot  
Of friends I once knew -  
My drama and hers begins weirdly  
Its dumb re-enactment,  
Each scene, sigh, and circumstance passing  
In spectral review.

- Wealth was mine beyond wish when I met her -  
The pride of the lowland -  
Embowered in Tintinhull Valley  
By laurel and yew;

And love lit my soul, notwithstanding  
My features' ill favour,  
Too obvious beside her perfections  
Of line and of hue.

But it pleased her to play on my passion,  
And whet me to pleadings  
That won from her mirthful negations  
And scornings undue.

Then I fled her disdains and derisions  
To cities of pleasure,  
And made me the crony of idlers  
In every purlieu.

Of those who lent ear to my story,  
A needy Adonis  
Gave hint how to grizzle her garden  
From roses to rue,

Could his price but be paid for so purging  
My scorner of scornings:  
Thus tempted, the lust to avenge me  
Germed inly and grew.



I clothed him in sumptuous apparel,  
Consigned to him coursers,  
Meet equipage, liveried attendants  
In full retinue.

So dowered, with letters of credit  
He wayfared to England,  
And spied out the manor she goddessed,  
And handy thereto,

Set to hire him a tenantless mansion  
As coign-stone of vantage  
For testing what gross adulation  
Of beauty could do.

He laboured through mornings and evens,  
On new moons and sabbaths,  
By wiles to enmesh her attention  
In park, path, and pew;

And having afar played upon her,  
Advanced his lines nearer,  
And boldly outleaping conventions,  
Bent briskly to woo.

His gay godlike face, his rare seeming  
Anon worked to win her,  
And later, at noontides and night-tides  
They held rendezvous.

His tarriance full spent, he departed  
And met me in Venice,  
And lines from her told that my jilter  
Was stooping to sue.

Not long could be further concealment,  
She pled to him humbly:  
"By our love and our sin, O protect me;  
I fly unto you!"

A mighty remorse overgat me,  
I heard her low anguish,  
And there in the gloom of the calle  
My steel ran him through.

A swift push engulfed his hot carrion  
Within the canal there -  
That still street of waters dividing  
The city in two.

- I wandered awhile all unable  
To smother my torment,  
My brain racked by yells as from Tophet  
Of Satan's whole crew.

A month of unrest brought me hovering  
At home in her precincts,  
To whose hiding-hole local story  
Afforded a clue.

Exposed, and expelled by her people,  
Afar off in London  
I found her alone, in a sombre  
And soul-stifling mew.

Still burning to make reparation  
I pleaded to wive her,  
And father her child, and thus faintly  
My mischief undo.

She yielded, and spells of calm weather  
Succeeded the tempest;  
And one sprung of him stood as scion  
Of my bone and thew . . .

But Time unveils sorrows and secrets,  
And so it befell now:  
By inches the curtain was twitched at,  
And slowly undrew.

As we lay, she and I, in the night-time,  
We heard the boy moaning:  
"O misery mine! My false father  
Has murdered my true!"

She gasped: yea, she heard; understood it.  
Next day the child fled us;  
And nevermore sighted was even  
A print of his shoe.

Thenceforward she shunned me, and languished;  
Till one day the park-pool  
Embraced her fair form, and extinguished  
Her eyes' living blue.

- So; ask not what blast may account for  
This aspect of pallor,  
These bones that just prison within them  
Life's poor residue;

But pass by, and leave unregarded  
A Cain to his suffering,  
For vengeance too dark on the woman  
Whose lover he slew.

## THE REJECTED MEMBER'S WIFE

We shall see her no more  
On the balcony,  
Smiling, while hurt, at the roar  
As of surging sea  
From the stormy sturdy band  
Who have doomed her lord's cause,  
Though she waves her little hand  
As it were applause.

Here will be candidates yet,  
And candidates' wives,  
Fervid with zeal to set  
Their ideals on our lives:  
Here will come market-men  
On the market-days,  
Here will clash now and then  
More such party assays.

And the balcony will fill  
When such times are renewed,  
And the throng in the street will thrill  
With to-day's mettled mood;  
But she will no more stand  
In the sunshine there,  
With that wave of her white-gloved hand,  
And that chestnut hair.

January 1906.

# THE FARM-WOMAN'S WINTER

## I

If seasons all were summers,  
And leaves would never fall,  
And hopping casement-comers  
Were foodless not at all,  
And fragile folk might be here  
That white winds bid depart;  
Then one I used to see here  
Would warm my wasted heart!

## II

One frail, who, bravely tilling  
Long hours in gripping gusts,  
Was mastered by their chilling,  
And now his ploughshare rusts.  
So savage winter catches  
The breath of limber things,  
And what I love he snatches,  
And what I love not, brings.

# AUTUMN IN KING'S HINTOCK PARK

Here by the baring bough  
Raking up leaves,  
Often I ponder how  
Springtime deceives, -  
I, an old woman now,  
Raking up leaves.

Here in the avenue  
Raking up leaves,  
Lords' ladies pass in view,  
Until one heaves  
Sighs at life's russet hue,  
Raking up leaves!

Just as my shape you see  
Raking up leaves,  
I saw, when fresh and free,  
Those memory weaves  
Into grey ghosts by me,  
Raking up leaves.

Yet, Dear, though one may sigh,  
Raking up leaves,  
New leaves will dance on high -  
Earth never grieves! -  
Will not, when missed am I  
Raking up leaves.

1901

## SHUT OUT THAT MOON

Close up the casement, draw the blind,  
Shut out that stealing moon,  
She wears too much the guise she wore  
Before our lutes were strewn  
With years-deep dust, and names we read  
On a white stone were hewn.

Step not out on the dew-dashed lawn  
To view the Lady's Chair,  
Immense Orion's glittering form,  
The Less and Greater Bear:  
Stay in; to such sights we were drawn  
When faded ones were fair.

Brush not the bough for midnight scents  
That come forth lingeringly,  
And wake the same sweet sentiments  
They breathed to you and me  
When living seemed a laugh, and love  
All it was said to be.

Within the common lamp-lit room  
Prison my eyes and thought;  
Let dingy details crudely loom,  
Mechanic speech be wrought:  
Too fragrant was Life's early bloom,  
Too tart the fruit it brought!

1904

# REMINISCENCES OF A DANCING MAN

## I

Who now remembers Almack's balls -  
Willis's sometime named -  
In those two smooth-floored upper halls  
For faded ones so famed?  
Where as we trod to trilling sound  
The fancied phantoms stood around,  
Or joined us in the maze,  
Of the powdered Dears from Georgian years,  
Whose dust lay in sightless sealed-up biers,  
The fairest of former days.

## II

Who now remembers gay Cremorne,  
And all its jaunty jills,  
And those wild whirling figures born  
Of Jullien's grand quadrilles?  
With hats on head and morning coats  
There footed to his prancing notes  
Our partner-girls and we;  
And the gas-jets winked, and the lustres clinked,  
And the platform throbbed as with arms enlinked  
We moved to the minstrelsy.

## III

Who now recalls those crowded rooms  
Of old yclept "The Argyle,"  
Where to the deep Drum-polka's booms  
We hopped in standard style?  
Whither have danced those damsels now!  
Is Death the partner who doth moue  
Their wormy chaps and bare?  
Do their spectres spin like sparks within  
The smoky halls of the Prince of Sin  
To a thunderous Jullien air?

# THE DEAD MAN WALKING

They hail me as one living,  
But don't they know  
That I have died of late years,  
Untombed although?

I am but a shape that stands here,  
A pulseless mould,  
A pale past picture, screening  
Ashes gone cold.

Not at a minute's warning,  
Not in a loud hour,  
For me ceased Time's enchantments  
In hall and bower.

There was no tragic transit,  
No catch of breath,  
When silent seasons inched me  
On to this death . . .

- A Troubadour-youth I rambled  
With Life for lyre,  
The beats of being raging  
In me like fire.

But when I practised eyeing  
The goal of men,  
It iced me, and I perished  
A little then.

When passed my friend, my kinsfolk  
Through the Last Door,  
And left me standing bleakly,  
I died yet more;

And when my Love's heart kindled  
In hate of me,  
Wherefore I knew not, died I  
One more degree.

And if when I died fully  
I cannot say,  
And changed into the corpse-thing  
I am to-day;

Yet is it that, though whiling  
The time somehow  
In walking, talking, smiling,  
I live not now.

## MORE LOVE LYRICS

1967

In five-score summers! All new eyes,  
New minds, new modes, new fools, new wise;  
New woes to weep, new joys to prize;

With nothing left of me and you  
In that live century's vivid view  
Beyond a pinch of dust or two;

A century which, if not sublime,  
Will show, I doubt not, at its prime,  
A scope above this blinkered time.

- Yet what to me how far above?  
For I would only ask thereof  
That thy worm should be my worm, Love!

16 WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS, 1867.

## HER DEFINITION

I lingered through the night to break of day,  
Nor once did sleep extend a wing to me,  
Intently busied with a vast array  
Of epithets that should outfigure thee.

Full-featured terms — all fitless — hastened by,  
And this sole speech remained: "That maiden mine!" -  
Debarred from due description then did I  
Perceive the indefinite phrase could yet define.

As common chests encasing wares of price  
Are borne with tenderness through halls of state,  
For what they cover, so the poor device  
Of homely wording I could tolerate,  
Knowing its unadornment held as freight  
The sweetest image outside Paradise.

W. P. V.,  
Summer 1866.



## THE DIVISION

Rain on the windows, creaking doors,  
With blasts that besom the green,  
And I am here, and you are there,  
And a hundred miles between!

O were it but the weather, Dear,  
O were it but the miles  
That summed up all our severance,  
There might be room for smiles.

But that thwart thing betwixt us twain,  
Which nothing cleaves or clears,  
Is more than distance, Dear, or rain,  
And longer than the years!

1893

## ON THE DEPARTURE PLATFORM

We kissed at the barrier; and passing through  
She left me, and moment by moment got  
Smaller and smaller, until to my view  
She was but a spot;

A wee white spot of muslin fluff  
That down the diminishing platform bore  
Through hustling crowds of gentle and rough  
To the carriage door.

Under the lamplight's fitful glowers,  
Behind dark groups from far and near,  
Whose interests were apart from ours,  
She would disappear,

Then show again, till I ceased to see  
That flexible form, that nebulous white;  
And she who was more than my life to me  
Had vanished quite . . .

We have penned new plans since that fair fond day,  
And in season she will appear again -  
Perhaps in the same soft white array -  
But never as then!

- “And why, young man, must eternally fly  
A joy you’ll repeat, if you love her well?”  
— O friend, nought happens twice thus; why,  
I cannot tell!

## IN A CATHEDRAL CITY

These people have not heard your name;  
No loungers in this placid place  
Have helped to bruit your beauty’s fame.

The grey Cathedral, towards whose face  
Bend eyes untold, has met not yours;  
Your shade has never swept its base,

Your form has never darked its doors,  
Nor have your faultless feet once thrown  
A pensive pit-pat on its floors.

Along the street to maids well known  
Blithe lovers hum their tender airs,  
But in your praise voice not a tone.

- Since nought bespeaks you here, or bears,  
As I, your imprint through and through,  
Here might I rest, till my heart shares  
The spot’s unconsciousness of you!

SALISBURY.

## I SAY I’LL SEEK HER

I say, “I’ll seek her side  
Ere hindrance interposes;”  
But eve in midnight closes,  
And here I still abide.

When darkness wears I see  
Her sad eyes in a vision;  
They ask, “What indecision  
Detains you, Love, from me? -

“The creaking hinge is oiled,  
I have unbarred the backway,  
But you tread not the trackway;  
And shall the thing be spoiled?

“Far cockcrows echo shrill,  
The shadows are abating,  
And I am waiting, waiting;  
But O, you tarry still!”

## HER FATHER

I met her, as we had privily planned,  
Where passing feet beat busily:  
She whispered: “Father is at hand!  
He wished to walk with me.”

His presence as he joined us there  
Banished our words of warmth away;  
We felt, with cloudings of despair,  
What Love must lose that day.

Her crimson lips remained unkissed,  
Our fingers kept no tender hold,  
His lack of feeling made the tryst  
Embarrassed, stiff, and cold.

A cynic ghost then rose and said,  
“But is his love for her so small  
That, nigh to yours, it may be read  
As of no worth at all?”

“You love her for her pink and white;  
But what when their fresh splendours close?  
His love will last her in despite  
Of Time, and wrack, and foes.”

WEYMOUTH.

## AT WAKING

When night was lifting,  
And dawn had crept under its shade,  
Amid cold clouds drifting  
Dead-white as a corpse outlaid,  
With a sudden scare  
I seemed to behold  
My Love in bare  
Hard lines unfold.

Yea, in a moment,  
An insight that would not die  
Killed her old endowment  
Of charm that had capped all nigh,  
Which vanished to none  
Like the gilt of a cloud,  
And showed her but one  
Of the common crowd.

She seemed but a sample  
Of earth's poor average kind,  
Lit up by no ample  
Enrichments of mien or mind.  
I covered my eyes  
As to cover the thought,  
And unrecognize  
What the morn had taught.

O vision appalling  
When the one believed-in thing  
Is seen falling, falling,  
With all to which hope can cling.  
Off: it is not true;  
For it cannot be  
That the prize I drew  
Is a blank to me!

WEYMOUTH, 1869.

## FOUR FOOTPRINTS

Here are the tracks upon the sand  
Where stood last evening she and I -  
Pressed heart to heart and hand to hand;  
The morning sun has baked them dry.

I kissed her wet face — wet with rain,  
For arid grief had burnt up tears,  
While reached us as in sleeping pain  
The distant gurgling of the weirs.

“I have married him — yes; feel that ring;  
'Tis a week ago that he put it on . . .  
A dutiful daughter does this thing,  
And resignation succeeds anon!

“But that I body and soul was yours  
Ere he'd possession, he'll never know.  
He's a confident man. 'The husband scores,'  
He says, 'in the long run' . . . Now, Dear, go!”  
I went. And to-day I pass the spot;  
It is only a smart the more to endure;  
And she whom I held is as though she were not,  
For they have resumed their honeymoon tour.

## IN THE VAULTED WAY

In the vaulted way, where the passage turned  
To the shadowy corner that none could see,  
You paused for our parting, — plaintively;  
Though overnight had come words that burned  
My fond frail happiness out of me.

And then I kissed you, — despite my thought  
That our spell must end when reflection came  
On what you had deemed me, whose one long aim  
Had been to serve you; that what I sought  
Lay not in a heart that could breathe such blame.

But yet I kissed you; whereon you again  
As of old kissed me. Why, why was it so?  
Do you cleave to me after that light-tongued blow?  
If you scorned me at eventide, how love then?  
The thing is dark, Dear. I do not know.

## IN THE MIND'S EYE

That was once her casement,  
And the taper nigh,  
Shining from within there,  
Beckoned, “Here am I!”

Now, as then, I see her  
Moving at the pane;  
Ah; 'tis but her phantom  
Borne within my brain! -

Foremost in my vision  
Everywhere goes she;  
Change dissolves the landscapes,  
She abides with me.

Shape so sweet and shy, Dear,  
Who can say thee nay?  
Never once do I, Dear,  
Wish thy ghost away.

## THE END OF THE EPISODE

Indulge no more may we  
In this sweet-bitter pastime:  
The love-light shines the last time  
Between you, Dear, and me.

There shall remain no trace  
Of what so closely tied us,  
And blank as ere love eyed us  
Will be our meeting-place.

The flowers and thymy air,  
Will they now miss our coming?  
The dumbles thin their humming  
To find we haunt not there?

Though fervent was our vow,  
Though ruddily ran our pleasure,  
Bliss has fulfilled its measure,  
And sees its sentence now.

Ache deep; but make no moans:  
Smile out; but stilly suffer:  
The paths of love are rougher  
Than thoroughfares of stones.

## THE SIGH

Little head against my shoulder,  
Shy at first, then somewhat bolder,  
And up-eyed;  
Till she, with a timid quaver,  
Yielded to the kiss I gave her;  
But, she sighed.

That there mingled with her feeling  
Some sad thought she was concealing  
It implied.

- Not that she had ceased to love me,  
None on earth she set above me;  
But she sighed.

She could not disguise a passion,  
Dread, or doubt, in weakest fashion  
If she tried:  
Nothing seemed to hold us sundered,  
Hearts were victors; so I wondered  
Why she sighed.

Afterwards I knew her thoroughly,  
And she loved me staunchly, truly,  
Till she died;  
But she never made confession  
Why, at that first sweet concession,  
She had sighed.

It was in our May, remember;  
And though now I near November,  
And abide  
Till my appointed change, unfretting,  
Sometimes I sit half regretting  
That she sighed.

## **IN THE NIGHT SHE CAME**

I told her when I left one day  
That whatsoever weight of care  
Might strain our love, Time's mere assault  
Would work no changes there.  
And in the night she came to me,  
Toothless, and wan, and old,  
With leaden concaves round her eyes,  
And wrinkles manifold.

I tremblingly exclaimed to her,  
"O wherefore do you ghost me thus!  
I have said that dull defacing Time  
Will bring no dreads to us."  
"And is that true of YOU?" she cried  
In voice of troubled tune.  
I faltered: "Well . . . I did not think  
You would test me quite so soon!"

She vanished with a curious smile,  
Which told me, plainlier than by word,  
That my staunch pledge could scarce beguile  
The fear she had averred.  
Her doubts then wrought their shape in me,  
And when next day I paid  
My due caress, we seemed to be  
Divided by some shade.

## THE CONFORMERS

Yes; we'll wed, my little fay,  
And you shall write you mine,  
And in a villa chastely gray  
We'll house, and sleep, and dine.  
But those night-screened, divine,  
Stolen trysts of heretofore,  
We of choice ecstasies and fine  
Shall know no more.

The formal faced cohue  
Will then no more upbraid  
With smiting smiles and whisperings two  
Who have thrown less loves in shade.  
We shall no more evade  
The searching light of the sun,  
Our game of passion will be played,  
Our dreaming done.



We shall not go in stealth  
To rendezvous unknown,  
But friends will ask me of your health,  
And you about my own.  
When we abide alone,  
No leapings each to each,  
But syllables in frigid tone  
Of household speech.

When down to dust we glide  
Men will not say askance,  
As now: "How all the country side  
Rings with their mad romance!"  
But as they graveward glance  
Remark: "In them we lose  
A worthy pair, who helped advance  
Sound parish views."

## THE DAWN AFTER THE DANCE

Here is your parents' dwelling with its curtained windows telling  
Of no thought of us within it or of our arrival here;  
Their slumbers have been normal after one day more of formal  
Matrimonial commonplace and household life's mechanic gear.

I would be candid willingly, but dawn draws on so chillingly  
As to render further cheerlessness intolerable now,  
So I will not stand endeavouring to declare a day for severing,  
But will clasp you just as always — just the olden love avow.

Through serene and surly weather we have walked the ways together,  
And this long night's dance this year's end eve now finishes the spell;  
Yet we dreamt us but beginning a sweet sempiternal spinning  
Of a cord we have spun to breaking — too intemperately, too well.

Yes; last night we danced I know, Dear, as we did that year ago, Dear,  
When a new strange bond between our days was formed, and felt, and heard;  
Would that dancing were the worst thing from the latest to the first thing  
That the faded year can charge us with; but what avails a word!

That which makes man's love the lighter and the woman's burn no brighter  
Came to pass with us inevitably while slipped the shortening year . . .  
And there stands your father's dwelling with its blind bleak windows telling  
That the vows of man and maid are frail as filmy gossamere.

WEYMOUTH, 1869.

## THE SUN ON THE LETTER

I drew the letter out, while gleamed  
The sloping sun from under a roof  
Of cloud whose verge rose visibly.

The burning ball flung rays that seemed  
Stretched like a warp without a woof  
Across the levels of the lea

To where I stood, and where they beamed  
As brightly on the page of proof  
That she had shown her false to me

As if it had shown her true — had teemed  
With passionate thought for my behoof  
Expressed with their own ardency!

## THE NIGHT OF THE DANCE

The cold moon hangs to the sky by its horn,  
And centres its gaze on me;  
The stars, like eyes in reverie,  
Their westering as for a while forborne,  
Quiz downward curiously.

Old Robert draws the backbrand in,  
The green logs steam and spit;  
The half-awakened sparrows flit  
From the riddled thatch; and owls begin  
To whoo from the gable-slit.

Yes; far and nigh things seem to know  
Sweet scenes are impending here;  
That all is prepared; that the hour is near  
For welcomes, fellowships, and flow  
Of sally, song, and cheer;

That spigots are pulled and viols strung;  
That soon will arise the sound  
Of measures trod to tunes renowned;  
That She will return in Love's low tongue  
My vows as we wheel around.

## MISCONCEPTION

I busied myself to find a sure  
Snug hermitage  
That should preserve my Love secure  
From the world's rage;  
Where no unseemly saturnals,  
Or strident traffic-roars,  
Or hum of intervolved cabals  
Should echo at her doors.

I laboured that the diurnal spin  
Of vanities  
Should not contrive to suck her in  
By dark degrees,  
And cunningly operate to blur  
Sweet teachings I had begun;  
And then I went full-heart to her  
To expound the glad deeds done.

She looked at me, and said thereto  
With a pitying smile,  
“And THIS is what has busied you  
So long a while?  
O poor exhausted one, I see  
You have worn you old and thin  
For naught! Those moils you fear for me  
I find most pleasure in!”

## THE VOICE OF THE THORN

### I

When the thorn on the down  
Quivers naked and cold,  
And the mid-aged and old  
Pace the path there to town,  
In these words dry and drear  
It seems to them sighing:  
“O winter is trying  
To sojourners here!”

## II

When it stands fully tressed  
On a hot summer day,  
And the ewes there astray  
Find its shade a sweet rest,  
By the breath of the breeze  
It inquires of each farer:  
“Who would not be sharer  
Of shadow with these?”

## III

But by day or by night,  
And in winter or summer,  
Should I be the comer  
Along that lone height,  
In its voicing to me  
Only one speech is spoken:  
“Here once was nigh broken  
A heart, and by thee.”

## FROM HER IN THE COUNTRY

I thought and thought of thy crass clanging town  
To folly, till convinced such dreams were ill,  
I held my heart in bond, and tethered down  
Fancy to where I was, by force of will.

I said: How beautiful are these flowers, this wood,  
One little bud is far more sweet to me  
Than all man’s urban shows; and then I stood  
Urging new zest for bird, and bush, and tree;

And strove to feel my nature brought it forth  
Of instinct, or no rural maid was I;  
But it was vain; for I could not see worth  
Enough around to charm a midge or fly,

And mused again on city din and sin,  
Longing to madness I might move therein!

16 W. P. V., 1866.

## HER CONFESSION

As some bland soul, to whom a debtor says  
"I'll now repay the amount I owe to you,"  
In inward gladness feigns forgetfulness  
That such a payment ever was his due  
    (His long thought notwithstanding), so did I  
At our last meeting waive your proffered kiss  
With quick divergent talk of scenery nigh,  
By such suspension to enhance my bliss.  
And as his looks in consternation fall  
When, gathering that the debt is lightly deemed,  
The debtor makes as not to pay at all,  
So faltered I, when your intention seemed  
    Converted by my false uneagerness  
To putting off for ever the caress.  
    W. P. V., 1865-67.

## TO AN IMPERSONATOR OF ROSALIND

Did he who drew her in the years ago -  
Till now conceived creator of her grace -  
With telescopic sight high natures know,  
Discern remote in Time's untravelled space  
    Your soft sweet mien, your gestures, as do we,  
And with a copyist's hand but set them down,  
Glowing yet more to dream our ecstasy  
When his Original should be forthshown?  
    For, kindled by that animated eye,  
Whereto all fairnesses about thee brim,  
And by thy tender tones, what wight can fly  
The wild conviction welling up in him  
    That he at length beholds woo, parley, plead,  
The "very, very Rosalind" indeed!  
    8 ADELPHI TERRACE, 21st April 1867.

## TO AN ACTRESS

I read your name when you were strange to me,  
Where it stood blazoned bold with many more;  
I passed it vacantly, and did not see  
Any great glory in the shape it wore.

O cruelty, the insight barred me then!  
Why did I not possess me with its sound,  
And in its cadence catch and catch again  
Your nature's essence floating therearound?

Could THAT man be this I, unknowing you,  
When now the knowing you is all of me,  
And the old world of then is now a new,  
And purpose no more what it used to be -  
A thing of formal journeywork, but due  
To springs that then were sealed up utterly?

1867

## THE MINUTE BEFORE MEETING

The grey gaunt days dividing us in twain  
Seemed hopeless hills my strength must faint to climb,  
But they are gone; and now I would detain  
The few clock-beats that part us; rein back Time,  
And live in close expectance never closed  
In change for far expectance closed at last,  
So harshly has expectance been imposed  
On my long need while these slow blank months passed.

And knowing that what is now about to be  
Will all HAVE BEEN in O, so short a space!  
I read beyond it my despondency  
When more dividing months shall take its place,  
Thereby denying to this hour of grace  
A full-up measure of felicity.

1871

## HE ABJURES LOVE

At last I put off love,  
For twice ten years  
The daysman of my thought,  
And hope, and doing;  
Being ashamed thereof,  
And faint of fears  
And desolations, wrought  
In his pursuing,  
    Since first in youthtime those  
Disquietings  
That heart-enslavement brings  
To hale and hoary,  
Became my housefellows,  
And, fool and blind,  
I turned from kith and kind  
To give him glory.

    I was as children be  
Who have no care;  
I did not shrink or sigh,  
I did not sicken;  
But lo, Love beckoned me,  
And I was bare,  
And poor, and starved, and dry,  
And fever-stricken.

    Too many times ablaze  
With fatuous fires,  
Enkindled by his wiles  
To new embraces,  
Did I, by wilful ways  
And baseless ires,  
Return the anxious smiles  
Of friendly faces.

    No more will now rate I  
The common rare,  
The midnight drizzle dew,  
The gray hour golden,  
The wind a yearning cry,  
The faulty fair,  
Things dreamt, of comelier hue  
Than things beholden! . . .

— I speak as one who plumbs  
Life's dim profound,  
One who at length can sound  
Clear views and certain.  
But — after love what comes?  
A scene that lours,  
A few sad vacant hours,  
And then, the Curtain.  
1883

## A SET OF COUNTRY SONGS

### LET ME ENJOY (MINOR KEY)

#### I

Let me enjoy the earth no less  
Because the all-enacting Might  
That fashioned forth its loveliness  
Had other aims than my delight.

#### II

About my path there flits a Fair,  
Who throws me not a word or sign;  
I'll charm me with her ignoring air,  
And laud the lips not meant for mine.

#### III

From manuscripts of moving song  
Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown  
I'll pour out raptures that belong  
To others, as they were my own.

#### IV

And some day hence, towards Paradise,  
And all its blest — if such should be -  
I will lift glad, afar-off eyes,  
Though it contain no place for me.



# AT CASTERBRIDGE FAIR

## I

### THE BALLAD-SINGER

Sing, Ballad-singer, raise a hearty tune;  
Make me forget that there was ever a one  
I walked with in the meek light of the moon  
When the day's work was done.

Rhyme, Ballad-rhymer, start a country song;  
Make me forget that she whom I loved well  
Swore she would love me dearly, love me long,  
Then — what I cannot tell!

Sing, Ballad-singer, from your little book;  
Make me forget those heart-breaks, achings, fears;  
Make me forget her name, her sweet sweet look -  
Make me forget her tears.

## II

### FORMER BEAUTIES

These market-dames, mid-aged, with lips thin-drawn,  
And tissues sere,  
Are they the ones we loved in years ago,  
And courted here?

Are these the muslined pink young things to whom  
We vowed and swore  
In nooks on summer Sundays by the Froom,  
Or Budmouth shore?

Do they remember those gay tunes we trod  
Clasped on the green;  
Aye; trod till moonlight set on the beaten sod  
A satin sheen?

They must forget, forget! They cannot know  
What once they were,  
Or memory would transfigure them, and show  
Them always fair.

## III

### AFTER THE CLUB-DANCE

Black'on frowns east on Maidon,  
And westward to the sea,  
But on neither is his frown laden  
With scorn, as his frown on me!

At dawn my heart grew heavy,  
I could not sip the wine,  
I left the jocund bevy  
And that young man o' mine.

The roadside elms pass by me, -  
Why do I sink with shame  
When the birds a-perch there eye me?  
They, too, have done the same!

## IV

### THE MARKET-GIRL

Nobody took any notice of her as she stood on the causey kerb,  
All eager to sell her honey and apples and bunches of garden herb;  
And if she had offered to give her wares and herself with them too that day,  
I doubt if a soul would have cared to take a bargain so choice away.

But chancing to trace her sunburnt grace that morning as I passed nigh,  
I went and I said "Poor maidy dear! — and will none of the people buy?"  
And so it began; and soon we knew what the end of it all must be,  
And I found that though no others had bid, a prize had been won by me.

## V

### THE INQUIRY

And are ye one of Hermitage -  
Of Hermitage, by Ivel Road,  
And do ye know, in Hermitage  
A thatch-roofed house where sengreens grow?  
And does John Waywood live there still -  
He of the name that there abode  
When father hurdled on the hill  
Some fifteen years ago?

Does he now speak o' Patty Beech,  
The Patty Beech he used to — see,  
Or ask at all if Patty Beech  
Is known or heard of out this way?  
- Ask ever if she's living yet,  
And where her present home may be,  
And how she bears life's fag and fret  
After so long a day?

In years agone at Hermitage  
This faded face was counted fair,  
None fairer; and at Hermitage  
We swore to wed when he should thrive.  
But never a chance had he or I,  
And waiting made his wish outwear,  
And Time, that dooms man's love to die,  
Preserves a maid's alive.

#### VI

#### A WIFE WAITS

Will's at the dance in the Club-room below,  
Where the tall liquor-cups foam;  
I on the pavement up here by the Bow,  
Wait, wait, to steady him home.

Will and his partner are treading a tune,  
Loving companions they be;  
Willy, before we were married in June,  
Said he loved no one but me;

Said he would let his old pleasures all go  
Ever to live with his Dear.

Will's at the dance in the Club-room below,  
Shivering I wait for him here.

NOTE. — "The Bow" (line 3). The old name for the curved corner by the cross - streets in the middle of Casterbridge.

#### VII

#### AFTER THE FAIR

The singers are gone from the Cornmarket-place  
With their broadsheets of rhymes,  
The street rings no longer in treble and bass  
With their skits on the times,  
And the Cross, lately thronged, is a dim naked space  
That but echoes the stammering chimes.

From Clock-corner steps, as each quarter ding-dongs,  
Away the folk roam  
By the "Hart" and Grey's Bridge into byways and "drongs,"  
Or across the ridged loam;  
The younger ones shrilling the lately heard songs,  
The old saying, "Would we were home."

The shy-seeming maiden so mute in the fair  
Now rattles and talks,  
And that one who looked the most swaggering there  
Grows sad as she walks,  
And she who seemed eaten by cankering care  
In statuesque sturdiness stalks.

And midnight clears High Street of all but the ghosts  
Of its buried burghees,  
From the latest far back to those old Roman hosts  
Whose remains one yet sees,  
Who loved, laughed, and fought, hailed their friends, drank their toasts  
At their meeting-times here, just as these!

1902

NOTE. — "The Chimes" (line 6) will be listened for in vain here at midnight now,  
having been abolished some years ago.

## THE DARK-EYED GENTLEMAN

### I

I pitched my day's leazings in Crimmercock Lane,  
To tie up my garter and jog on again,  
When a dear dark-eyed gentleman passed there and said,  
In a way that made all o' me colour rose-red,  
"What do I see -  
O pretty knee!"  
And he came and he tied up my garter for me.

## II

'Twi'xt sunset and moonrise it was, I can mind:  
Ah, 'tis easy to lose what we nevermore find! -  
Of the dear stranger's home, of his name, I knew nought,  
But I soon knew his nature and all that it brought.  
Then bitterly  
Sobbed I that he  
Should ever have tied up my garter for me!

## III

Yet now I've beside me a fine lissom lad,  
And my slip's nigh forgot, and my days are not sad;  
My own dearest joy is he, comrade, and friend,  
He it is who safe-guards me, on him I depend;  
No sorrow brings he,  
And thankful I be  
That his daddy once tied up my garter for me!  
NOTE. — "Leazings" (line 1). — Bundle of gleaned corn.

## TO CARREY CLAVEL

You turn your back, you turn your back,  
And never your face to me,  
Alone you take your homeward track,  
And scorn my company.

What will you do when Charley's seen  
Dewbeating down this way?  
- You'll turn your back as now, you mean?  
Nay, Carrey Clavel, nay!

You'll see none's looking; put your lip  
Up like a tulip, so;  
And he will coll you, bend, and sip:  
Yes, Carrey, yes; I know!

## THE ORPHANED OLD MAID

I wanted to marry, but father said, “No -  
‘Tis weakness in women to give themselves so;  
If you care for your freedom you’ll listen to me,  
Make a spouse in your pocket, and let the men be.”

I spake on’t again and again: father cried,  
“Why — if you go husbanding, where shall I bide?  
For never a home’s for me elsewhere than here!”  
And I yielded; for father had ever been dear.

But now father’s gone, and I feel growing old,  
And I’m lonely and poor in this house on the wold,  
And my sweetheart that was found a partner elsewhere,  
And nobody flings me a thought or a care.

## THE SPRING CALL

Down Wessex way, when spring’s a-shine,  
The blackbird’s “pret-ty de-urr!”  
In Wessex accents marked as mine  
Is heard afar and near.

He flutes it strong, as if in song  
No R’s of feebler tone  
Than his appear in “pretty dear,”  
Have blackbirds ever known.

Yet they pipe “prattie deerh!” I glean,  
Beneath a Scottish sky,  
And “pehty de-aw!” amid the treen  
Of Middlesex or nigh.

While some folk say — perhaps in play -  
Who know the Irish isle,  
‘Tis “purrity dare!” in treeland there  
When songsters would beguile.

Well: I’ll say what the listening birds  
Say, hearing “pret-ty de-urr!” -  
However strangers sound such words,  
That’s how we sound them here.

Yes, in this clime at pairing time,  
As soon as eyes can see her  
At dawn of day, the proper way  
To call is “pret-ty de-urr!”

## JULIE-JANE

Sing; how 'a would sing!  
How 'a would raise the tune  
When we rode in the waggon from harvesting  
By the light o' the moon!

Dance; how 'a would dance!  
If a fiddlestring did but sound  
She would hold out her coats, give a slanting glance,  
And go round and round.

Laugh; how 'a would laugh!  
Her peony lips would part  
As if none such a place for a lover to quaff  
At the deeps of a heart.

Julie, O girl of joy,  
Soon, soon that lover he came.  
Ah, yes; and gave thee a baby-boy,  
But never his name . . .

— Tolling for her, as you guess;  
And the baby too . . . 'Tis well.  
You knew her in maidhood likewise? — Yes,  
That's her burial bell.

"I suppose," with a laugh, she said,  
"I should blush that I'm not a wife;  
But how can it matter, so soon to be dead,  
What one does in life!"

When we sat making the mourning  
By her death-bed side, said she,  
"Dears, how can you keep from your lovers, adorning  
In honour of me!"

Bubbling and brightsome eyed!  
But now — O never again.  
She chose her bearers before she died  
From her fancy-men.

NOTE. — It is, or was, a common custom in Wessex, and probably other country places, to prepare the mourning beside the death-bed, the dying person sometimes assisting, who also selects his or her bearers on such occasions.

"Coats" (line 7). — Old name for petticoats.

# NEWS FOR HER MOTHER

## I

One mile more is  
Where your door is  
Mother mine! -  
Harvest's coming,  
Mills are strumming,  
Apples fine,  
And the cider made to-year will be as wine.

## II

Yet, not viewing  
What's a-doing  
Here around  
Is it thrills me,  
And so fills me  
That I bound  
Like a ball or leaf or lamb along the ground.

## III

Tremble not now  
At your lot now,  
Silly soul!  
Hosts have sped them  
Quick to wed them,  
Great and small,  
Since the first two sighing half-hearts made a whole.

## IV

Yet I wonder,  
Will it sunder  
Her from me?  
Will she guess that  
I said "Yes," — that  
His I'd be,  
Ere I thought she might not see him as I see!



## V

Old brown gable,  
Granary, stable,  
Here you are!  
O my mother,  
Can another  
Ever bar  
Mine from thy heart, make thy nearness seem afar?

## THE FIDDLER

The fiddler knows what's brewing  
To the lilt of his lyric wiles:  
The fiddler knows what rueing  
Will come of this night's smiles!

He sees couples join them for dancing,  
And afterwards joining for life,  
He sees them pay high for their prancing  
By a welter of wedded strife.

He twangs: "Music hails from the devil,  
Though vaunted to come from heaven,  
For it makes people do at a revel  
What multiplies sins by seven.

"There's many a heart now mangled,  
And waiting its time to go,  
Whose tendrils were first entangled  
By my sweet viol and bow!"

## THE HUSBAND'S VIEW

"Can anything avail  
Beldame, for my hid grief? -  
Listen: I'll tell the tale,  
It may bring faint relief! -

"I came where I was not known,  
In hope to flee my sin;  
And walking forth alone  
A young man said, 'Good e'en.'

“In gentle voice and true  
He asked to marry me;  
‘You only — only you  
Fulfil my dream!’ said he.

“We married o’ Monday morn,  
In the month of hay and flowers;  
My cares were nigh forsworn,  
And perfect love was ours.

“But ere the days are long  
Untimely fruit will show;  
My Love keeps up his song,  
Undreaming it is so.

“And I awake in the night,  
And think of months gone by,  
And of that cause of flight  
Hidden from my Love’s eye.

“Discovery borders near,  
And then! . . . But something stirred? -  
My husband — he is here!  
Heaven — has he overheard?” -

“Yes; I have heard, sweet Nan;  
I have known it all the time.  
I am not a particular man;  
Misfortunes are no crime:

“And what with our serious need  
Of sons for soldiering,  
That accident, indeed,  
To maids, is a useful thing!”

## **ROSE-ANN**

Why didn’t you say you was promised, Rose-Ann?  
Why didn’t you name it to me,  
Ere ever you tempted me hither, Rose-Ann,  
So often, so wearifully?

O why did you let me be near ‘ee, Rose-Ann,  
Talking things about wedlock so free,  
And never by nod or by whisper, Rose-Ann,  
Give a hint that it wasn’t to be?

Down home I was raising a flock of stock ewes,  
Cocks and hens, and wee chickens by scores,  
And lavendered linen all ready to use,  
A-dreaming that they would be yours.

Mother said: "She's a sport-making maiden, my son";  
And a pretty sharp quarrel had we;  
O why do you prove by this wrong you have done  
That I saw not what mother could see?

Never once did you say you was promised, Rose-Ann,  
Never once did I dream it to be;  
And it cuts to the heart to be treated, Rose-Ann,  
As you in your scorning treat me!

## THE HOMECOMING

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller downland broad and bare,  
And lonesome was the house, and dark; and few came there.

"Now don't ye rub your eyes so red; we're home and have no cares;  
Here's a skimmer-cake for supper, peckled onions, and some pears;  
I've got a little keg o' summat strong, too, under stairs:  
- What, slight your husband's victuals? Other brides can tackle theirs!"

The wind of winter mooded and mouthed their chimney like a horn,  
And round the house and past the house 'twas leafless and lorn.

"But my dear and tender poppet, then, how came ye to agree  
In Ivel church this morning? Sure, there-right you married me!"  
- "Hoo-hoo! — I don't know — I forgot how strange and far 'twould be,  
An' I wish I was at home again with dear daddee!"

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller downland broad and bare,  
And lonesome was the house and dark; and few came there.

"I didn't think such furniture as this was all you'd own,  
And great black beams for ceiling, and a floor o' wretched stone,  
And nasty pewter platters, horrid forks of steel and bone,  
And a monstrous crock in chimney. 'Twas to me quite unbeknown!"

Rattle rattle went the door; down flapped a cloud of smoke,  
As shifting north the wicked wind assayed a smarter stroke.

"Now sit ye by the fire, poppet; put yourself at ease:  
And keep your little thumb out of your mouth, dear, please!  
And I'll sing to 'ee a pretty song of lovely flowers and bees,  
And happy lovers taking walks within a grove o' trees."

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller Down, so bleak and bare,  
And lonesome was the house, and dark; and few came there.

“Now, don’t ye gnaw your handkercher; ‘twill hurt your little tongue,  
And if you do feel spitish, ‘tis because ye are over young;  
But you’ll be getting older, like us all, ere very long,  
And you’ll see me as I am — a man who never did ‘ee wrong.”

Straight from Whit’sheet Hill to Benvill Lane the blusters pass,  
Hitting hedges, milestones, handposts, trees, and tufts of grass.

“Well, had I only known, my dear, that this was how you’d be,  
I’d have married her of riper years that was so fond of me.  
But since I can’t, I’ve half a mind to run away to sea,  
And leave ‘ee to go barefoot to your d-d daddee!”

Up one wall and down the other — past each window-pane -  
Prance the gusts, and then away down Crimmercrock’s long lane.

“I — I — don’t know what to say to’t, since your wife I’ve vowed to be;  
And as ‘tis done, I s’pose here I must bide — poor me!  
Aye — as you are ki-ki-kind, I’ll try to live along with ‘ee,  
Although I’d fain have stayed at home with dear daddee!”

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller Down, so bleak and bare,  
And lonesome was the house and dark; and few came there.

“That’s right, my Heart! And though on haunted Toller Down we be,  
And the wind swears things in chimley, we’ll to supper merrily!  
So don’t ye tap your shoe so pettish-like; but smile at me,  
And ye’ll soon forget to sock and sigh for dear daddee!”

December 1901.

## PIECES OCCASIONAL AND VARIOUS

### A CHURCH ROMANCE

(MELLSTOCK circa 1835)

She turned in the high pew, until her sight  
Swept the west gallery, and caught its row  
Of music-men with viol, book, and bow  
Against the sinking sad tower-window light.

She turned again; and in her pride’s despite  
One strenuous viol’s inspirer seemed to throw  
A message from his string to her below,  
Which said: “I claim thee as my own forthright!”

Thus their hearts' bond began, in due time signed.  
And long years thence, when Age had scared Romance,  
At some old attitude of his or glance  
That gallery-scene would break upon her mind,  
With him as minstrel, ardent, young, and trim,  
Bowling "New Sabbath" or "Mount Ephraim."

## **THE RASH BRIDE AN EXPERIENCE OF THE MELLSTOCK QUIRE**

### **I**

We Christmas-carolled down the Vale, and up the Vale, and round the Vale,  
We played and sang that night as we were yearly wont to do -  
A carol in a minor key, a carol in the major D,  
Then at each house: "Good wishes: many Christmas joys to you!"

### **II**

Next, to the widow's John and I and all the rest drew on. And I  
Discerned that John could hardly hold the tongue of him for joy.  
The widow was a sweet young thing whom John was bent on marrying,  
And quiring at her casement seemed romantic to the boy.

### **III**

"She'll make reply, I trust," said he, "to our salute? She must!" said he,  
"And then I will accost her gently — much to her surprise! -  
For knowing not I am with you here, when I speak up and call her dear  
A tenderness will fill her voice, a bashfulness her eyes.

### **IV**

So, by her window-square we stood; ay, with our lanterns there we stood,  
And he along with us, — not singing, waiting for a sign;  
And when we'd quired her carols three a light was lit and out looked she,  
A shawl about her bedgown, and her colour red as wine.

## V

And sweetly then she bowed her thanks, and smiled, and spoke aloud her thanks;  
When lo, behind her back there, in the room, a man appeared.  
I knew him — one from Woolcomb way — Giles Swetman — honest as the day,  
But eager, hasty; and I felt that some strange trouble neared.

## VI

“How comes he there? . . . Suppose,” said we, “she’s wed of late! Who knows?” said we.

- “She married yester-morning — only mother yet has known  
The secret o’t!” shrilled one small boy. “But now I’ve told, let’s wish ‘em joy!”

A heavy fall aroused us: John had gone down like a stone.

## VII

We rushed to him and caught him round, and lifted him, and brought him round,

When, hearing something wrong had happened, oped the window she:  
“Has one of you fallen ill?” she asked, “by these night labours overtasked?”  
None answered. That she’d done poor John a cruel turn felt we.

## VIII

Till up spoke Michael: “Fie, young dame! You’ve broke your promise, sly young dame,

By forming this new tie, young dame, and jilting John so true,  
Who trudged to-night to sing to ‘ee because he thought he’d bring to ‘ee  
Good wishes as your coming spouse. May ye such trifling rue!”

## IX

Her man had said no word at all; but being behind had heard it all,  
And now cried: “Neighbours, on my soul I knew not ‘twas like this!”  
And then to her: “If I had known you’d had in tow not me alone,  
No wife should you have been of mine. It is a dear bought bliss!”

## X

She changed death-white, and heaved a cry: we’d never heard so grieved a cry

As came from her at this from him: heart-broken quite seemed she;  
And suddenly, as we looked on, she turned, and rushed; and she was gone,  
Whither, her husband, following after, knew not; nor knew we.

## XI

We searched till dawn about the house; within the house, without the house,  
We searched among the laurel boughs that grew beneath the wall,  
And then among the crocks and things, and stores for winter junketings,  
In linhay, loft, and dairy; but we found her not at all.

## XII

Then John rushed in: "O friends," he said, "hear this, this, this!" and  
bends his head:  
"I've — searched round by the — WELL, and find the cover open wide!  
I am fearful that — I can't say what . . . Bring lanterns, and some cords to  
knot."  
We did so, and we went and stood the deep dark hole beside.

## XIII

And then they, ropes in hand, and I — ay, John, and all the band, and I  
Let down a lantern to the depths — some hundred feet and more;  
It glimmered like a fog-dimmed star; and there, beside its light, afar,  
White drapery floated, and we knew the meaning that it bore.

## XIV

The rest is naught . . . We buried her o' Sunday. Neighbours carried her;  
And Swetman — he who'd married her — now miserablest of men,  
Walked mourning first; and then walked John; just quivering, but composed  
anon;  
And we the quire formed round the grave, as was the custom then.

## XV

Our old bass player, as I recall — his white hair blown — but why recall! -  
His viol upstrapped, bent figure — doomed to follow her full soon -  
Stood bowing, pale and tremulous; and next to him the rest of us . . .  
We sang the Ninetieth Psalm to her — set to Saint Stephen's tune.

# THE DEAD QUIRE

## I

Beside the Mead of Memories,  
Where Church-way mounts to Moaning Hill,  
The sad man sighed his phantasies:  
He seems to sigh them still.

## II

“‘Twas the Birth-tide Eve, and the hamleteers  
Made merry with ancient Mellstock zest,  
But the Mellstock quire of former years  
Had entered into rest.

## III

“Old Dewy lay by the gaunt yew tree,  
And Reuben and Michael a pace behind,  
And Bowman with his family  
By the wall that the ivies bind.

## IV

“The singers had followed one by one,  
Treble, and tenor, and thorough-bass;  
And the worm that wasteth had begun  
To mine their mouldering place.

## V

“For two-score years, ere Christ-day light,  
Mellstock had throbbed to strains from these;  
But now there echoed on the night  
No Christmas harmonies.

## VI

“Three meadows off, at a dormered inn,  
The youth had gathered in high carouse,  
And, ranged on settles, some therein  
Had drunk them to a drowse.

## VII



“Loud, lively, reckless, some had grown,  
Each dandling on his jiggling knee  
Eliza, Dolly, Nance, or Joan -  
Livers in levity.

### VIII

“The taper flames and hearthfire shine  
Grew smoke-hazed to a lurid light,  
And songs on subjects not divine  
Were warbled forth that night.

### IX

“Yet many were sons and grandsons here  
Of those who, on such eves gone by,  
At that still hour had throated clear  
Their anthems to the sky.

### X

“The clock belled midnight; and ere long  
One shouted, ‘Now ‘tis Christmas morn;  
Here’s to our women old and young,  
And to John Barleycorn!’

### XI

“They drink the toast and shout again:  
The pewter-ware rings back the boom,  
And for a breath-while follows then  
A silence in the room.

### XII

“When nigh without, as in old days,  
The ancient quire of voice and string  
Seemed singing words of prayer and praise  
As they had used to sing:

### **XIII**

“‘While shepherds watch’d their flocks by night,’ -  
Thus swells the long familiar sound  
In many a quaint symphonic flight -  
To, ‘Glory shone around.’

### **XIV**

“The sons defined their fathers’ tones,  
The widow his whom she had wed,  
And others in the minor moans  
The viols of the dead.

### **XV**

“Something supernal has the sound  
As verse by verse the strain proceeds,  
And stilly staring on the ground  
Each roysterer holds and heeds.

### **XVI**

“Towards its chorded closing bar  
Plaintively, thinly, waned the hymn,  
Yet lingered, like the notes afar  
Of banded seraphim.

### **XVII**

“With brows abashed, and reverent tread,  
The hearkeners sought the tavern door:  
But nothing, save wan moonlight, spread  
The empty highway o’er.

### **XVIII**

“While on their hearing fixed and tense  
The aerial music seemed to sink,  
As it were gently moving thence  
Along the river brink.

## **XIX**

“Then did the Quick pursue the Dead  
By crystal Froom that crinkles there;  
And still the viewless quire ahead  
Voiced the old holy air.

## **XX**

“By Bank-walk wicket, brightly bleached,  
It passed, and ‘twixt the hedges twain,  
Dogged by the living; till it reached  
The bottom of Church Lane.

## **XXI**

“There, at the turning, it was heard  
Drawing to where the churchyard lay:  
But when they followed thitherward  
It smalled, and died away.

## **XXII**

“Each headstone of the quire, each mound,  
Confronted them beneath the moon;  
But no more floated therearound  
That ancient Birth-night tune.

## **XXIII**

“There Dewy lay by the gaunt yew tree,  
There Reuben and Michael, a pace behind,  
And Bowman with his family  
By the wall that the ivies bind . . .

## **XXIV**

“As from a dream each sobered son  
Awoke, and musing reached his door:  
‘Twas said that of them all, not one  
Sat in a tavern more.”

## XXV

- The sad man ceased; and ceased to heed  
His listener, and crossed the leaze  
From Moaning Hill towards the mead -  
The Mead of Memories.

1897

## THE CHRISTENING

Whose child is this they bring  
Into the aisle? -  
At so superb a thing  
The congregation smile  
And turn their heads awhile.

Its eyes are blue and bright,  
Its cheeks like rose;  
Its simple robes unite  
Whitest of calicoes  
With lawn, and satin bows.

A pride in the human race  
At this paragon  
Of mortals, lights each face  
While the old rite goes on;  
But ah, they are shocked anon.

What girl is she who peeps  
From the gallery stair,  
Smiles palely, redly weeps,  
With feverish furtive air  
As though not fitly there?

"I am the baby's mother;  
This gem of the race  
The decent fain would smother,  
And for my deep disgrace  
I am bidden to leave the place."

"Where is the baby's father?" -  
"In the woods afar.  
He says there is none he'd rather  
Meet under moon or star  
Than me, of all that are.

“To clasp me in lovelike weather,  
Wish fixing when,  
He says: To be together  
At will, just now and then,  
Makes him the blest of men;  
“But chained and doomed for life  
To slovening  
As vulgar man and wife,  
He says, is another thing:  
Yea: sweet Love’s sepulchring!”  
1904

## A DREAM QUESTION

“It shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine.”  
Micah iii. 6.

I asked the Lord: “Sire, is this true  
Which hosts of theologians hold,  
That when we creatures censure you  
For shaping griefs and ails untold  
(Deeming them punishments undue)  
You rage, as Moses wrote of old?

When we exclaim: ‘Beneficent  
He is not, for he orders pain,  
Or, if so, not omnipotent:  
To a mere child the thing is plain!’  
Those who profess to represent  
You, cry out: ‘Impious and profane!’“

He: “Save me from my friends, who deem  
That I care what my creatures say!  
Mouth as you list: sneer, rail, blaspheme,  
O manikin, the livelong day,  
Not one grief-groan or pleasure-gleam  
Will you increase or take away.

“Why things are thus, whoso derides,  
May well remain my secret still . . .  
A fourth dimension, say the guides,  
To matter is conceivable.  
Think some such mystery resides  
Within the ethic of my will.”

## BY THE BARROWS

Not far from Mellstock — so tradition saith -  
Where barrows, bulging as they bosoms were  
Of Multimammia stretched supinely there,  
Catch night and noon the tempest's wanton breath,

A battle, desperate doubtless unto death,  
Was one time fought. The outlook, lone and bare,  
The towering hawk and passing raven share,  
And all the upland round is called "The He'th."

Here once a woman, in our modern age,  
Fought singlehandedly to shield a child -  
One not her own — from a man's senseless rage.  
And to my mind no patriots' bones there piled  
So consecrate the silence as her deed  
Of stoic and devoted self-unheed.

## A WIFE AND ANOTHER

"War ends, and he's returning  
Early; yea,  
The evening next to-morrow's!" -  
— This I say  
To her, whom I suspiciously survey,  
Holding my husband's letter  
To her view. -  
She glanced at it but lightly,  
And I knew  
That one from him that day had reached her too.

There was no time for scruple;  
Secretly  
I filched her missive, conned it,  
Learnt that he  
Would lodge with her ere he came home to me.

To reach the port before her,  
And, unscanned,  
There wait to intercept them  
Soon I planned:  
That, in her stead, I might before him stand.

So purposed, so effected;  
 At the inn  
 Assigned, I found her hidden:-  
 O that sin  
 Should bear what she bore when I entered in!  
     Her heavy lids grew laden  
 With despairs,  
 Her lips made soundless movements  
 Unawares,  
 While I peered at the chamber hired as theirs.  
     And as beside its doorway,  
 Deadly hued,  
 One inside, one withoutside  
 We two stood,  
 He came — my husband — as she knew he would.  
     No pleasurable triumph  
 Was that sight!  
 The ghastly disappointment  
 Broke them quite.  
 What love was theirs, to move them with such might!  
     "Madam, forgive me!" said she,  
 Sorrow bent,  
 "A child — I soon shall bear him . . .  
 Yes — I meant  
 To tell you — that he won me ere he went."  
     Then, as it were, within me  
 Something snapped,  
 As if my soul had largened:  
 Conscience-capped,  
 I saw myself the snarer — them the trapped.  
     "My hate dies, and I promise,  
 Grace-beguiled,"  
 I said, "to care for you, be  
 Reconciled;  
 And cherish, and take interest in the child."  
     Without more words I pressed him  
 Through the door  
 Within which she stood, powerless  
 To say more,  
 And closed it on them, and downstairward bore.

“He joins his wife — my sister,”  
I, below,  
Remarked in going — lightly -  
Even as though  
All had come right, and we had arranged it so . . .  
    As I, my road retracing,  
Left them free,  
The night alone embracing  
Childless me,  
I held I had not stirred God wrothfully.

## **THE ROMAN ROAD**

    The Roman Road runs straight and bare  
As the pale parting-line in hair  
Across the heath. And thoughtful men  
Contrast its days of Now and Then,  
And delve, and measure, and compare;  
    Visioning on the vacant air  
Helméd legionaries, who proudly rear  
The Eagle, as they pace again  
The Roman Road.

    But no tall brass-helméd legionnaire  
Haunts it for me. Uprises there  
A mother’s form upon my ken,  
Guiding my infant steps, as when  
We walked that ancient thoroughfare,  
The Roman Road.

## **THE VAMPIRINE FAIR**

    Gilbert had sailed to India’s shore,  
And I was all alone:  
My lord came in at my open door  
And said, “O fairest one!”

    He leant upon the slant bureau,  
And sighed, “I am sick for thee!”  
“My lord,” said I, “pray speak not so,  
Since wedded wife I be.”



Leaning upon the slant bureau,  
Bitter his next words came:  
"So much I know; and likewise know  
My love burns on the same!

"But since you thrust my love away,  
And since it knows no cure,  
I must live out as best I may  
The ache that I endure."

When Michaelmas brownd the nether Coomb,  
And Wingreen Hill above,  
And made the hollyhocks rags of bloom,  
My lord grew ill of love.

My lord grew ill with love for me;  
Gilbert was far from port;  
And — so it was — that time did see  
Me housed at Manor Court.

About the bowers of Manor Court  
The primrose pushed its head  
When, on a day at last, report  
Arrived of him I had wed.

"Gilbert, my lord, is homeward bound,  
His sloop is drawing near,  
What shall I do when I am found  
Not in his house but here?"

"O I will heal the injuries  
I've done to him and thee.  
I'll give him means to live at ease  
Afar from Shastonb'ry."

When Gilbert came we both took thought:  
"Since comfort and good cheer,"  
Said he, "So readily are bought,  
He's welcome to thee, Dear."

So when my lord flung liberally  
His gold in Gilbert's hands,  
I coaxed and got my brothers three  
Made stewards of his lands.

And then I coaxed him to install  
My other kith and kin,  
With aim to benefit them all  
Before his love ran thin.

And next I craved to be possessed  
Of plate and jewels rare.  
He groaned: "You give me, Love, no rest,  
Take all the law will spare!"

And so in course of years my wealth  
Became a goodly hoard,  
My steward brethren, too, by stealth  
Had each a fortune stored.

Thereafter in the gloom he'd walk,  
And by and by began  
To say aloud in absent talk,  
"I am a ruined man! -

"I hardly could have thought," he said,  
"When first I looked on thee,  
That one so soft, so rosy red,  
Could thus have beggared me!"

Seeing his fair estates in pawn,  
And him in such decline,  
I knew that his domain had gone  
To lift up me and mine.

Next month upon a Sunday morn  
A gunshot sounded nigh:  
By his own hand my lordly born  
Had doomed himself to die.

"Live, my dear lord, and much of thine  
Shall be restored to thee!"  
He smiled, and said 'twixt word and sign,  
"Alas — that cannot be!"

And while I searched his cabinet  
For letters, keys, or will,  
'Twas touching that his gaze was set  
With love upon me still.

And when I burnt each document  
Before his dying eyes,  
'Twas sweet that he did not resent  
My fear of compromise.

The steeple-cock gleamed golden when  
I watched his spirit go:  
And I became repentant then  
That I had wrecked him so.

Three weeks at least had come and gone,  
With many a saddened word,  
Before I wrote to Gilbert on  
The stroke that so had stirred.

And having worn a mournful gown,  
I joined, in decent while,  
My husband at a dashing town  
To live in dashing style.

Yet though I now enjoy my fling,  
And dine and dance and drive,  
I'd give my prettiest emerald ring  
To see my lord alive.

And when the meet on hunting-days  
Is near his churchyard home,  
I leave my bantering beaux to place  
A flower upon his tomb;

And sometimes say: "Perhaps too late  
The saints in Heaven deplore  
That tender time when, moved by Fate,  
He darked my cottage door."

## THE REMINDER

### I

While I watch the Christmas blaze  
Paint the room with ruddy rays,  
Something makes my vision glide  
To the frosty scene outside.

There, to reach a rotting berry,  
Toils a thrush, — constrained to very  
Dregs of food by sharp distress,  
Taking such with thankfulness.

Why, O starving bird, when I  
One day's joy would justify,  
And put misery out of view,  
Do you make me notice you!

## THE RAMBLER

I do not see the hills around,  
Nor mark the tints the copses wear;  
I do not note the grassy ground  
And constellated daisies there.

I hear not the contralto note  
Of cuckoos hid on either hand,  
The whirr that shakes the nighthawk's throat  
When eve's brown awning hoods the land.

Some say each songster, tree, and mead -  
All eloquent of love divine -  
Receives their constant careful heed:  
Such keen appraisement is not mine.

The tones around me that I hear,  
The aspects, meanings, shapes I see,  
Are those far back ones missed when near,  
And now perceived too late by me!

## NIGHT IN THE OLD HOME

When the wasting embers redden the chimney-breast,  
And Life's bare pathway looms like a desert track to me,  
And from hall and parlour the living have gone to their rest,  
My perished people who housed them here come back to me.

They come and seat them around in their mouldy places,  
Now and then bending towards me a glance of wistfulness,  
A strange upbraiding smile upon all their faces,  
And in the bearing of each a passive tristfulness.

"Do you uphold me, lingering and languishing here,  
A pale late plant of your once strong stock?" I say to them;  
"A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,  
And on That which consigns men to night after showing the day to them?"

"— O let be the Wherefore! We fevered our years not thus:  
Take of Life what it grants, without question!" they answer me seemingly.  
"Enjoy, suffer, wait: spread the table here freely like us,  
And, satisfied, placid, unfretting, watch Time away beamingly!"

## AFTER THE LAST BREATH (J. H. 1813-1904)

There's no more to be done, or feared, or hoped;  
None now need watch, speak low, and list, and tire;  
No irksome crease outsmoothed, no pillow sloped  
Does she require.

Blankly we gaze. We are free to go or stay;  
Our morrow's anxious plans have missed their aim;  
Whether we leave to-night or wait till day  
Counts as the same.

The lettered vessels of medicaments  
Seem asking wherefore we have set them here;  
Each palliative its silly face presents  
As useless gear.

And yet we feel that something savours well;  
We note a numb relief withheld before;  
Our well-beloved is prisoner in the cell  
Of Time no more.

We see by littles now the deft achievement  
Whereby she has escaped the Wrongers all,  
In view of which our momentary bereavement  
Outshapes but small.

1904

## IN CHILDBED

In the middle of the night  
Mother's spirit came and spoke to me,  
Looking weariful and white -  
As 'twere untimely news she broke to me.

"O my daughter, joyed are you  
To own the weetless child you mother there;  
'Men may search the wide world through,'  
You think, 'nor find so fair another there!'

"Dear, this midnight time unwombs  
Thousands just as rare and beautiful;  
Thousands whom High Heaven foredooms  
To be as bright, as good, as dutiful.

"Source of ecstatic hopes and fears  
And innocent maternal vanity,  
Your fond exploit but shapes for tears  
New thoroughfares in sad humanity.

"Yet as you dream, so dreamt I  
When Life stretched forth its morning ray to me;  
Other views for by and by!" . . .  
Such strange things did mother say to me.

## **THE PINE PLANTERS (MARTY SOUTH'S REVERIE)**

### **I**

We work here together  
In blast and breeze;  
He fills the earth in,  
I hold the trees.

He does not notice  
That what I do  
Keeps me from moving  
And chills me through.

He has seen one fairer  
I feel by his eye,  
Which skims me as though  
I were not by.

And since she passed here  
He scarce has known  
But that the woodland  
Holds him alone.

I have worked here with him  
Since morning shine,  
He busy with his thoughts  
And I with mine.

I have helped him so many,  
So many days,  
But never win any  
Small word of praise!

Shall I not sigh to him  
That I work on  
Glad to be nigh to him  
Though hope is gone?

Nay, though he never  
Knew love like mine,  
I'll bear it ever  
And make no sign!

## II

From the bundle at hand here  
I take each tree,  
And set it to stand, here  
Always to be;  
When, in a second,  
As if from fear  
Of Life unreckoned  
Beginning here,  
It starts a sighing  
Through day and night,  
Though while there lying  
'Twas voiceless quite.

It will sigh in the morning,  
Will sigh at noon,  
At the winter's warning,  
In wafts of June;  
Grieving that never  
Kind Fate decreed  
It should for ever  
Remain a seed,  
And shun the welter  
Of things without,  
Unneeding shelter  
From storm and drought.

Thus, all unknowing  
For whom or what  
We set it growing  
In this bleak spot,  
It still will grieve here  
Throughout its time,  
Unable to leave here,  
Or change its clime;  
Or tell the story  
Of us to-day  
When, halt and hoary,  
We pass away.

## THE DEAR

I plodded to Fairmile Hill-top, where  
A maiden one fain would guard  
From every hazard and every care  
Advanced on the roadside sward.

I wondered how succeeding suns  
Would shape her wayfarings,  
And wished some Power might take such ones  
Under Its warding wings.

The busy breeze came up the hill  
And smartened her cheek to red,  
And frizzled her hair to a haze. With a will  
"Good-morning, my Dear!" I said.

She glanced from me to the far-off gray,  
And, with proud severity,  
"Good-morning to you — though I may say  
I am not YOUR Dear," quoth she:

"For I am the Dear of one not here -  
One far from his native land!" -  
And she passed me by; and I did not try  
To make her understand.

1901



## ONE WE KNEW (M. H. 1772-1857)

She told how they used to form for the country dances -  
"The Triumph," "The New-rigged Ship" -

To the light of the guttering wax in the panelled manses,  
And in cots to the blink of a dip.

She spoke of the wild "poussetting" and "allemanding"  
On carpet, on oak, and on sod;  
And the two long rows of ladies and gentlemen standing,  
And the figures the couples trod.

She showed us the spot where the maypole was yearly planted,  
And where the bandsmen stood  
While breeched and kerchiefed partners whirled, and panted  
To choose each other for good.

She told of that far-back day when they learnt astounded  
Of the death of the King of France:  
Of the Terror; and then of Bonaparte's unbounded  
Ambition and arrogance.

Of how his threats woke warlike preparations  
Along the southern strand,  
And how each night brought tremors and trepidations  
Lest morning should see him land.

She said she had often heard the gibbet creaking  
As it swayed in the lightning flash,  
Had caught from the neighbouring town a small child's shrieking  
At the cart-tail under the lash . . .

With cap-framed face and long gaze into the embers -  
We seated around her knees -  
She would dwell on such dead themes, not as one who remembers,  
But rather as one who sees.

She seemed one left behind of a band gone distant  
So far that no tongue could hail:  
Past things retold were to her as things existent,  
Things present but as a tale.

May 20, 1902.

## SHE HEARS THE STORM

There was a time in former years -  
While my roof-tree was his -  
When I should have been distressed by fears  
At such a night as this!

I should have murmured anxiously,  
"The pricking rain strikes cold;  
His road is bare of hedge or tree,  
And he is getting old."

But now the fitful chimney-roar,  
The drone of Thorncombe trees,  
The Froom in flood upon the moor,  
The mud of Mellstock Leaze,

The candle slanting sooty wick'd,  
The thuds upon the thatch,  
The eaves-drops on the window flicked,  
The clacking garden-hatch,

And what they mean to wayfarers,  
I scarcely heed or mind;  
He has won that storm-tight roof of hers  
Which Earth grants all her kind.

## A WET NIGHT

I pace along, the rain-shafts riddling me,  
Mile after mile out by the moorland way,  
And up the hill, and through the ewe-leaze gray  
Into the lane, and round the corner tree;

Where, as my clothing clams me, mire-bestarred,  
And the enfeebled light dies out of day,  
Leaving the liquid shades to reign, I say,  
"This is a hardship to be calendared!"

Yet sires of mine now perished and forgot,  
When worse beset, ere roads were shapen here,  
And night and storm were foes indeed to fear,  
Times numberless have trudged across this spot  
In sturdy muteness on their strenuous lot,  
And taking all such toils as trifles mere.

## BEFORE LIFE AND AFTER

A time there was — as one may guess  
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell -  
Before the birth of consciousness,  
When all went well.

None suffered sickness, love, or loss,  
None knew regret, starved hope, or heart-burnings;  
None cared whatever crash or cross  
Brought wrack to things.

If something ceased, no tongue bewailed,  
If something winced and waned, no heart was wrung;  
If brightness dimmed, and dark prevailed,  
No sense was stung.

But the disease of feeling germed,  
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong;  
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed  
How long, how long?

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

"I have finished another year," said God,  
"In grey, green, white, and brown;  
I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,  
Sealed up the worm within the clod,  
And let the last sun down."

"And what's the good of it?" I said.  
"What reasons made you call  
From formless void this earth we tread,  
When nine-and-ninety can be read  
Why nought should be at all?"

"Yea, Sire; why shaped you us, 'who in  
This tabernacle groan' -  
If ever a joy be found herein,  
Such joy no man had wished to win  
If he had never known!"

Then he: "My labours — logicless -  
You may explain; not I:  
Sense-sealed I have wrought, without a guess  
That I evolved a Consciousness  
To ask for reasons why.

“Strange that ephemeral creatures who  
By my own ordering are,  
Should see the shortness of my view,  
Use ethic tests I never knew,  
Or made provision for!”

He sank to raptness as of yore,  
And opening New Year’s Day  
Wove it by rote as theretofore,  
And went on working evermore  
In his unweeting way.

1906

## **GOD’S EDUCATION**

I saw him steal the light away  
That haunted in her eye:  
It went so gently none could say  
More than that it was there one day  
And missing by-and-by.

I watched her longer, and he stole  
Her lily tincts and rose;  
All her young sprightliness of soul  
Next fell beneath his cold control,  
And disappeared like those.

I asked: “Why do you serve her so?  
Do you, for some glad day,  
Hoard these her sweets — ?” He said, “O no,  
They charm not me; I bid Time throw  
Them carelessly away.”

Said I: “We call that cruelty -  
We, your poor mortal kind.”  
He mused. “The thought is new to me.  
Forsooth, though I men’s master be,  
Theirs is the teaching mind!”

## **TO SINCERITY**

O sweet sincerity! -  
Where modern methods be  
What scope for thine and thee?

Life may be sad past saying,  
Its greens for ever graying,  
Its faiths to dust decaying;  
And youth may have foreknown it,  
And riper seasons shown it,  
But custom cries: "Disown it:  
"Say ye rejoice, though grieving,  
Believe, while unbelieving,  
Behold, without perceiving!"

- Yet, would men look at true things,  
And unilluded view things,  
And count to bear undue things,

The real might mend the seeming,  
Facts better their foredeeming,  
And Life its disesteeming.  
February 1899.

## **PANTHERA**

(For other forms of this legend — first met with in the second century — see Origen contra Celsum; the Talmud; Sepher Toldoth Jeschu; quoted fragments of lost Apocryphal gospels; Strauss, Haeckel; etc.)

Yea, as I sit here, crutched, and cricked, and bent,  
 I think of Panthera, who underwent  
 Much from insidious aches in his decline;  
 But his aches were not radical like mine;  
 They were the twinges of old wounds — the feel  
 Of the hand he had lost, shorn by barbarian steel,  
 Which came back, so he said, at a change in the air,  
 Fingers and all, as if it still were there.  
 My pains are otherwise: upclosing cramps  
 And stiffened tendons from this country's damp,  
 Where Panthera was never commandant. -  
 The Fates sent him by way of the Levant.  
 He had been blithe in his young manhood's time,  
 And as centurion carried well his prime.  
 In Ethiop, Araby, climes fair and fell,  
 He had seen service and had borne him well.  
 Nought shook him then: he was serene as brave;  
 Yet later knew some shocks, and would grow grave  
 When pondering them; shocks less of corporal kind  
 Than phantom-like, that disarranged his mind;  
 And it was in the way of warning me  
 (By much his junior) against levity  
 That he recounted them; and one in chief  
 Panthera loved to set in bold relief.  
 This was a tragedy of his Eastern days,  
 Personal in touch — though I have sometimes thought  
 That touch a possible delusion — wrought  
 Of half-conviction carried to a craze -  
 His mind at last being stressed by ails and age:-  
 Yet his good faith thereon I well could wage.

I had said it long had been a wish with me  
 That I might leave a scion — some small tree  
 As channel for my sap, if not my name -  
 Ay, offspring even of no legitimate claim,  
 In whose advance I secretly could joy.  
 Thereat he warned.  
 "Cancel such wishes, boy!  
 A son may be a comfort or a curse,  
 A seer, a doer, a coward, a fool; yea, worse -  
 A criminal . . . That I could testify!"  
 "Panthera has no guilty son!" cried I  
 All unbelieving. "Friend, you do not know,"  
 He darkly dropt: "True, I've none now to show,  
 For THE LAW TOOK HIM. Ay, in sooth, Jove shaped it so!"  
 "This noon is not unlike," he again began,  
 "The noon these pricking memories print on me -  
 Yea, that day, when the sun grew copper-red,  
 And I served in Judaea . . . 'Twas a date  
 Of rest for arms. The Pax Romana ruled,  
 To the chagrin of frontier legionaries!  
 Palestine was annexed — though sullen yet, -  
 I, being in age some two-score years and ten  
 And having the garrison in Jerusalem  
 Part in my hands as acting officer  
 Under the Governor. A tedious time  
 I found it, of routine, amid a folk  
 Restless, contentless, and irascible. -  
 Quelling some riot, sentrying court and hall,  
 Sending men forth on public meeting-days  
 To maintain order, were my duties there.

”Then came a morn in spring, and the cheerful sun  
Whitened the city and the hills around,  
And every mountain-road that clambered them,  
Tincturing the greyness of the olives warm,  
And the rank cacti round the valley’s sides.  
The day was one whereon death-penalties  
Were put in force, and here and there were set  
The soldiery for order, as I said,  
Since one of the condemned had raised some heat,  
And crowds surged passionately to see him slain.  
I, mounted on a Cappadocian horse,  
With some half-company of auxiliaries,  
Had captained the procession through the streets  
When it came streaming from the judgment-hall  
After the verdicts of the Governor.  
It drew to the great gate of the northern way  
That bears towards Damascus; and to a knoll  
Upon the common, just beyond the walls -  
Whence could be swept a wide horizon round  
Over the housetops to the remotest heights.  
Here was the public execution-ground  
For city crimes, called then and doubtless now  
Golgotha, Kranion, or Calvaria.

”The usual dooms were duly meted out;  
Some three or four were stript, transfixed, and nailed,  
And no great stir occurred. A day of wont  
It was to me, so far, and would have slid  
Clean from my memory at its squalid close  
But for an incident that followed these.

”Among the tag-rag rabble of either sex  
That hung around the wretches as they writhed,  
Till thrust back by our spears, one held my eye -  
A weeping woman, whose strained countenance,  
Sharpened against a looming livid cloud,  
Was mocked by the crude rays of afternoon -  
The mother of one of those who suffered there  
I had heard her called when spoken roughly to  
By my ranged men for pressing forward so.  
It stole upon me hers was a face I knew;  
Yet when, or how, I had known it, for a while  
Eluded me. And then at once it came.



”Some thirty years or more before that noon  
I was sub-captain of a company  
Drawn from the legion of Calabria,  
That marched up from Judaea north to Tyre.  
We had pierced the old flat country of Jezreel,  
The great Esdraelon Plain and fighting-floor  
Of Jew with Canaanite, and with the host  
Of Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, met  
While crossing there to strike the Assyrian pride.  
We left behind Gilboa; passed by Nain;  
Till bulging Tabor rose, embossed to the top  
With arbute, terabinth, and locust growths.

”Encumbering me were sundry sick, so fallen  
Through drinking from a swamp beside the way;  
But we pressed on, till, bearing over a ridge,  
We dipt into a world of pleasantness -  
A vale, the fairest I had gazed upon -  
Which lapped a village on its furthest slopes  
Called Nazareth, brimmed round by uplands nigh.  
In the midst thereof a fountain bubbled, where,  
Lime-dry from marching, our glad halt we made  
To rest our sick ones, and refresh us all.

”Here a day onward, towards the eventide,  
Our men were piping to a Pyrrhic dance  
Trod by their comrades, when the young women came  
To fill their pitchers, as their custom was.  
I proffered help to one — a slim girl, coy  
Even as a fawn, meek, and as innocent.  
Her long blue gown, the string of silver coins  
That hung down by her banded beautiful hair,  
Symbolled in full immaculate modesty.

”Well, I was young, and hot, and readily stirred  
To quick desire. ‘Twas tedious timing out  
The convalescence of the soldiery;  
And I beguiled the long and empty days  
By blissful yieldance to her sweet allure,  
Who had no arts, but what out-arted all,  
The tremulous tender charm of trustfulness.  
We met, and met, and under the winking stars  
That passed which peoples earth — true union, yea,  
To the pure eye of her simplicity.

"Meanwhile the sick found health; and we pricked on.  
I made her no rash promise of return,  
As some do use; I was sincere in that;  
I said we sundered never to meet again -  
And yet I spoke untruth unknowingly! -  
For meet again we did. Now, guess you aught?  
The weeping mother on Calvaria  
Was she I had known — albeit that time and tears  
Had wasted rudely her once flowerlike form,  
And her soft eyes, now swollen with sorrowing.

"Though I betrayed some qualms, she marked me not;  
And I was scarce of mood to comrade her  
And close the silence of so wide a time  
To claim a malefactor as my son -  
(For so I guessed him). And inquiry made  
Brought rumour how at Nazareth long before  
An old man wedded her for pity's sake  
On finding she had grown pregnant, none knew how,  
Cared for her child, and loved her till he died.

"Well; there it ended; save that then I learnt  
That he — the man whose ardent blood was mine -  
Had waked sedition long among the Jews,  
And hurled insulting parlance at their god,  
Whose temple bulked upon the adjoining hill,  
Vowing that he would raze it, that himself  
Was god as great as he whom they adored,  
And by descent, moreover, was their king;  
With sundry other incitements to misrule.

"The impalements done, and done the soldiers' game  
Of raffling for the clothes, a legionary,  
Longinus, pierced the young man with his lance  
At signs from me, moved by his agonies  
Through naysaying the drug they had offered him.  
It brought the end. And when he had breathed his last  
The woman went. I saw her never again . . .  
Now glares my moody meaning on you, friend? -  
That when you talk of offspring as sheer joy  
So trustingly, you blink contingencies.  
Fors Fortuna! He who goes fathering  
Gives frightful hostages to hazardry!"

Thus Panthera's tale. 'Twas one he seldom told,  
But yet it got abroad. He would unfold,  
At other times, a story of less gloom,  
Though his was not a heart where jests had room.  
He would regret discovery of the truth  
Was made too late to influence to ruth  
The Procurator who had condemned his son —  
Or rather him so deemed. For there was none  
To prove that Panthera erred not: and indeed,  
When vagueness of identity I would plead,  
Panther himself would sometimes own as much -  
Yet lothly. But, assuming fact was such,  
That the said woman did not recognize  
Her lover's face, is matter for surprise.  
However, there's his tale, fantasy or otherwise.

Thereafter shone not men of Panthera's kind:  
The indolent heads at home were ill-inclined  
To press campaigning that would hoist the star  
Of their lieutenants valorous afar.  
Jealousies kept him irked abroad, controlled  
And stinted by an Empire no more bold.  
Yet in some actions southward he had share -  
In Mauretania and Numidia; there  
With eagle eye, and sword and steed and spur,  
Quelling uprisings promptly. Some small stir  
In Parthia next engaged him, until maimed,  
As I have said; and cynic Time proclaimed  
His noble spirit broken. What a waste  
Of such a Roman! — one in youth-time graced  
With indescribable charm, so I have heard,  
Yea, magnetism impossible to word  
When faltering as I saw him. What a fame,  
O Son of Saturn, had adorned his name,  
Might the Three so have urged Thee! — Hour by hour  
His own disorders hampered Panthera's power  
To brood upon the fate of those he had known,  
Even of that one he always called his own -  
Either in morbid dream or memory . . .  
He died at no great age, untroubulously,  
An exit rare for ardent soldiers such as he.

## THE UNBORN

I rose at night, and visited  
The Cave of the Unborn:  
And crowding shapes surrounded me  
For tidings of the life to be,  
Who long had prayed the silent Head  
To haste its advent morn.

Their eyes were lit with artless trust,  
Hope thrilled their every tone;  
“A scene the loveliest, is it not?  
A pure delight, a beauty-spot  
Where all is gentle, true and just,  
And darkness is unknown?”

My heart was anguished for their sake,  
I could not frame a word;  
And they descried my sunken face,  
And seemed to read therein, and trace  
The news that pity would not break,  
Nor truth leave unaverred.

And as I silently retired  
I turned and watched them still,  
And they came helter-skelter out,  
Driven forward like a rabble rout  
Into the world they had so desired  
By the all-immanent Will.

1905

## THE MAN HE KILLED

”Had he and I but met  
By some old ancient inn,  
We should have sat us down to wet  
Right many a nipperkin!

”But ranged as infantry,  
And staring face to face,  
I shot at him as he at me,  
And killed him in his place.

"I shot him dead because -  
 Because he was my foe,  
 Just so: my foe of course he was;  
 That's clear enough; although  
 "He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,  
 Off-hand like — just as I -  
 Was out of work — had sold his traps -  
 No other reason why.  
 "Yes; quaint and curious war is!  
 You shoot a fellow down  
 You'd treat if met where any bar is,  
 Or help to half-a-crown."  
 1902

## GEOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE (A MEMORY OF CHRISTIANA C-)

Where Blackmoor was, the road that led  
 To Bath, she could not show,  
 Nor point the sky that overspread  
 Towns ten miles off or so.

But that Calcutta stood this way,  
 Cape Horn there figured fell,  
 That here was Boston, here Bombay,  
 She could declare full well.

Less known to her the track athwart  
 From Mead or Yell'ham Wood  
 Than how to make some Austral port  
 In seas of surly mood.

She saw the glint of Guinea's shore  
 Behind the plum-tree nigh,  
 Heard old unruly Biscay's roar  
 In the weir's purl hard by . . .

"My son's a sailor, and he knows  
 All seas and many lands,  
 And when he's home he points and shows  
 Each country where it stands.

“He’s now just there — by Gib’s high rock -  
And when he gets, you see,  
To Portsmouth here, behind the clock,  
Then he’ll come back to me!”

## ONE RALPH BLOSSOM SOLILOQUIZES

(“It being deposed that vij women who were mayds before he knew them have been brought upon the towne [rates?] by the fornicacions of one Ralph Blossom, Mr Major inquired why he should not contribute xiv pence weekly toward their mayntenance. But it being shewn that the sayd R. B. was dying of a purple feaver, no order was made.” — Budmouth Borough Minutes: 16 — .)

When I am in hell or some such place,  
A-groaning over my sorry case,  
What will those seven women say to me  
Who, when I coaxed them, answered “Aye” to me?

“I did not understand your sign!”  
Will be the words of Caroline;  
While Jane will cry, “If I’d had proof of you,  
I should have learnt to hold aloof of you!”

“I won’t reproach: it was to be!”  
Will dryly murmur Cicely;  
And Rosa: “I feel no hostility,  
For I must own I lent facility.”

Lizzy says: “Sharp was my regret,  
And sometimes it is now! But yet  
I joy that, though it brought notoriousness,  
I knew Love once and all its gloriousness!”

Says Patience: “Why are we apart?  
Small harm did you, my poor Sweet Heart!  
A manchild born, now tall and beautiful,  
Was worth the ache of days undutiful.”

And Anne cries: “O the time was fair,  
So wherefore should you burn down there?  
There is a deed under the sun, my Love,  
And that was ours. What’s done is done, my Love.  
These trumpets here in Heaven are dumb to me  
With you away. Dear, come, O come to me!”

# THE NOBLE LADY'S TALE (circa 1790)

## I

"We moved with pensive paces,  
I and he,  
And bent our faded faces  
Wistfully,  
For something troubled him, and troubled me.

"The lanthorn feebly lightened  
Our grey hall,  
Where ancient brands had brightened  
Hearth and wall,  
And shapes long vanished whither vanish all.

"O why, Love, nightly, daily,'  
I had said,  
'Dost sigh, and smile so palely,  
As if shed  
Were all Life's blossoms, all its dear things dead?'

"Since silence sets thee grieving,'  
He replied,  
'And I abhor deceiving  
One so tried,  
Why, Love, I'll speak, ere time us twain divide.'

"He held me, I remember,  
Just as when  
Our life was June — (September  
It was then);  
And we walked on, until he spoke again.

"Susie, an Irish mummer,  
Loud-acclaimed  
Through the gay London summer,  
Was I; named  
A master in my art, who would be famed.

"But lo, there beamed before me  
Lady Su;  
God's altar-vow she swore me  
When none knew,  
And for her sake I bade the sock adieu.

"My Lord your father's pardon  
 Thus I won:  
 He let his heart unhardened  
 Towards his son,  
 And honourably condoned what we had done;  
 "But said — recall you, dearest? -  
 As for Su,  
 I'd see her — ay, though nearest  
 Me unto -  
 Sooner entombed than in a stage purlieu!  
 "Just so. — And here he housed us,  
 In this nook,  
 Where Love like balm has drowsed us:  
 Robin, rook,  
 Our chief familiars, next to string and book.  
 "Our days here, peace-enshrouded,  
 Followed strange  
 The old stage-joyance, crowded,  
 Rich in range;  
 But never did my soul desire a change,  
 "Till now, when far uncertain  
 Lips of yore  
 Call, call me to the curtain,  
 There once more,  
 But ONCE, to tread the boards I trod before.  
 "A night — the last and single  
 Ere I die -  
 To face the lights, to mingle  
 As did I  
 Once in the game, and rivet every eye!  
 "To something drear, distressing  
 As the knell  
 Of all hopes worth possessing!' . . .  
 — What befell  
 Seemed linked with me, but how I could not tell.  
 "Hours passed; till I implored him,  
 As he knew  
 How faith and frankness toward him  
 Ruled me through,  
 To say what ill I had done, and could undo.



"FAITH — FRANKNESS. Ah! Heaven save such!"  
 Murmured he,  
 'They are wedded wealth! I gave such  
 Liberally,  
 But you, Dear, not. For you suspected me.'  
 "I was about beseeching  
 In hurt haste  
 More meaning, when he, reaching  
 To my waist,  
 Led me to pace the hall as once we paced.  
 "I never meant to draw you  
 To own all,'  
 Declared he. 'But — I SAW you -  
 By the wall,  
 Half-hid. And that was why I failed withal!'

"Where? when?" said I — 'Why, nigh me,  
 At the play  
 That night. That you should spy me,  
 Doubt my fay,  
 And follow, furtive, took my heart away!'

"That I had never been there,  
 But had gone  
 To my locked room — unseen there,  
 Curtains drawn,  
 Long days abiding — told I, wonder-wan.

"Nay, 'twas your form and vesture,  
 Cloak and gown,  
 Your hooded features — gesture  
 Half in frown,  
 That faced me, pale,' he urged, 'that night in town.

"And when, outside, I handed  
 To her chair  
 (As courtesy demanded  
 Of me there)  
 The leading lady, you peeped from the stair.

"Straight pleaded I: 'Forsooth, Love,  
 Had I gone,  
 I must have been in truth, Love,  
 Mad to don  
 Such well-known raiment.' But he still went on

”That he was not mistaken  
Nor misled. -  
I felt like one forsaken,  
Wished me dead,  
That he could think thus of the wife he had wed!  
”His going seemed to waste him  
Like a curse,  
To wreck what once had graced him;  
And, averse  
To my approach, he mused, and moped, and worse.  
”Till, what no words effected  
Thought achieved:  
IT WAS MY WRAITH — projected,  
He conceived,  
Thither, by my tense brain at home aggrieved.  
”Thereon his credence centred  
Till he died;  
And, no more tempted, entered  
Sanctified,  
The little vault with room for one beside.”

### III

Thus far the lady’s story. -  
Now she, too,  
Reclines within that hoary  
Last dark mew  
In Mellstock Quire with him she loved so true.  
A yellowing marble, placed there  
Tablet-wise,  
And two joined hearts enchased there  
Meet the eyes;  
And reading their twin names we moralise:  
Did she, we wonder, follow  
Jealously?  
And were those protests hollow? -  
Or saw he  
Some semblant dame? Or can wraiths really be?

Were it she went, her honour,  
All may hold,  
Pressed truth at last upon her  
Till she told -  
(Him only — others as these lines unfold.)  
Riddle death-sealed for ever,  
Let it rest! . . .  
One's heart could blame her never  
If one guessed  
That go she did. She knew her actor best.

## UNREALIZED

Down comes the winter rain -  
Spoils my hat and bow -  
Runs into the poll of me;  
But mother won't know.  
We've been out and caught a cold,  
Knee-deep in snow;  
Such a lucky thing it is  
That mother won't know!  
Rosy lost herself last night -  
Couldn't tell where to go.  
Yes — it rather frightened her,  
But mother didn't know.  
Somebody made Willy drunk  
At the Christmas show:  
O 'twas fun! It's well for him  
That mother won't know!  
Howsoever wild we are,  
Late at school or slow,  
Mother won't be cross with us,  
Mother won't know.  
How we cried the day she died!  
Neighbours whispering low . . .  
But we now do what we will -  
Mother won't know.

## WAGTAIL AND BABY

A baby watched a ford, whereto  
A wagtail came for drinking;  
A blaring bull went wading through,  
The wagtail showed no shrinking.

A stallion splashed his way across,  
The birdie nearly sinking;  
He gave his plumes a twitch and toss,  
And held his own unblinking.

Next saw the baby round the spot  
A mongrel slowly slinking;  
The wagtail gazed, but faltered not  
In dip and sip and prinking.

A perfect gentleman then neared;  
The wagtail, in a winking,  
With terror rose and disappeared;  
The baby fell a-thinking.

## ABERDEEN

(April: 1905)

“And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times.” — Isaiah xxxiii. 6.

I looked and thought, “All is too gray and cold  
To wake my place-enthusiasms of old!”  
Till a voice passed: “Behind that granite mien  
Lurks the imposing beauty of a Queen.”  
I looked anew; and saw the radiant form  
Of Her who soothes in stress, who steers in storm,  
On the grave influence of whose eyes sublime  
Men count for the stability of the time.

## GEORGE MEREDITH 1828-1909

Forty years back, when much had place  
That since has perished out of mind,  
I heard that voice and saw that face.

He spoke as one afoot will wind  
A morning horn ere men awake;  
His note was trenchant, turning kind.

He was of those whose wit can shake  
And riddle to the very core  
The counterfeits that Time will break . . .

Of late, when we two met once more,  
The luminous countenance and rare  
Shone just as forty years before.

So that, when now all tongues declare  
His shape unseen by his green hill,  
I scarce believe he sits not there.

No matter. Further and further still  
Through the world's vaporous vitiate air  
His words wing on — as live words will.

May 1909.

## **YELL'HAM-WOOD'S STORY**

Coomb-Firtrees say that Life is a moan,  
And Clyffe-hill Clump says "Yea!"  
But Yell'ham says a thing of its own:

It's not "Gray, gray  
Is Life alway!"

That Yell'ham says,  
Nor that Life is for ends unknown.

It says that Life would signify  
A thwarted purposing:  
That we come to live, and are called to die,  
Yes, that's the thing  
In fall, in spring,  
That Yell'ham says:-  
"Life offers — to deny!"

1902

## **A YOUNG MAN'S EPIGRAM ON EXISTENCE**

A senseless school, where we must give  
Our lives that we may learn to live!  
A dolt is he who memorizes  
Lessons that leave no time for prizes.

16 W. P. V., 1866.

# SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE

This collection of poems was published in 1914 and includes the 18 poem sequence 'Poems of 1912-13'. Satires and Circumstances is widely regarded to be the greatest achievement of Hardy's poetic career. With many poems being inspired by the tragic loss of his wife Emma, the collection includes some of the most powerful poems ever to portray the theme of bereavement.

The first edition

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## IN FRONT OF THE LANDSCAPE

Plunging and labouring on in a tide of visions,  
 Dolorous and dear,  
 Forward I pushed my way as amid waste waters  
 Stretching around,  
 Through whose eddies there glimmered the customed landscape  
 Yonder and near,

Blotted to feeble mist. And the coomb and the upland  
 Foliage-crowned,  
 Ancient chalk-pit, milestone, rills in the grass-flat  
 Stroked by the light,  
 Seemed but a ghost-like gauze, and no substantial  
 Meadow or mound.

What were the infinite spectacles bulking foremost  
 Under my sight,  
 Hindering me to discern my paced advancement  
 Lengthening to miles;  
 What were the re-creations killing the daytime  
 As by the night?

O they were speechful faces, gazing insistent,  
 Some as with smiles,  
 Some as with slow-born tears that brinily trundled  
 Over the wrecked  
 Cheeks that were fair in their flush-time, ash now with anguish,  
 Harrowed by wiles.

Yes, I could see them, feel them, hear them, address them -  
 Halo-bedecked -  
 And, alas, onwards, shaken by fierce unreason,  
 Rigid in hate,  
 Smitten by years-long wryness born of misprision,  
 Dreaded, suspect.

Then there would breast me shining sights, sweet seasons  
Further in date;  
Instruments of strings with the tenderest passion  
Vibrant, beside  
Lamps long extinguished, robes, cheeks, eyes with the earth's crust  
Now corporate.

Also there rose a headland of hoary aspect  
Gnawed by the tide,  
Frisled by the nimb of the morning as two friends stood there  
Guilelessly glad -  
Wherefore they knew not — touched by the fringe of an ecstasy  
Scantly descried.

Later images too did the day unfurl me,  
Shadowed and sad,  
Clay cadavers of those who had shared in the dramas,  
Laid now at ease,  
Passions all spent, chiefest the one of the broad brow  
Sepulture-clad.

So did beset me scenes miscalled of the bygone,  
Over the leaze,  
Past the clump, and down to where lay the beheld ones;  
— Yea, as the rhyme  
Sung by the sea-swell, so in their pleading dumbness  
Captured me these.

For, their lost revisiting manifestations  
In their own time  
Much had I slighted, caring not for their purport,  
Seeing behind  
Things more coveted, reckoned the better worth calling  
Sweet, sad, sublime.

Thus do they now show hourly before the intenser  
Stare of the mind  
As they were ghosts avenging their slights by my bypast  
Body-borne eyes,  
Show, too, with fuller translation than rested upon them  
As living kind.

Hence wag the tongues of the passing people, saying  
In their surmise,  
“Ah — whose is this dull form that perambulates, seeing nought  
Round him that looms  
Whithersoever his footsteps turn in his farings,  
Save a few tombs?”

## CHANNEL FIRING

That night your great guns, unawares,  
Shook all our coffins as we lay,  
And broke the chancel window-squares,  
We thought it was the Judgment-day  
    And sat upright. While drearisome  
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:  
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,  
The worms drew back into the mounds,  
    The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;  
It's gunnery practice out at sea  
Just as before you went below;  
The world is as it used to be:  
    "All nations striving strong to make  
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters  
They do no more for Christes sake  
Than you who are helpless in such matters.  
    "That this is not the judgment-hour  
For some of them's a blessed thing,  
For if it were they'd have to scour  
Hell's floor for so much threatening . . .  
    "Ha, ha. It will be warmer when  
I blow the trumpet (if indeed  
I ever do; for you are men,  
And rest eternal sorely need)."  
    So down we lay again. "I wonder,  
Will the world ever saner be,"  
Said one, "than when He sent us under  
In our indifferent century!"  
    And many a skeleton shook his head.  
"Instead of preaching forty year,"  
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,  
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."  
    Again the guns disturbed the hour,  
Roaring their readiness to avenge,  
As far inland as Stourton Tower,  
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.  
    April 1914.

# THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN

(Lines on the loss of the "Titanic")

## I

In a solitude of the sea  
Deep from human vanity,  
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

## II

Steel chambers, late the pyres  
Of her salamandrine fires,  
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

## III

Over the mirrors meant  
To glass the opulent  
The sea-worm crawls — grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

## IV

Jewels in joy designed  
To ravish the sensuous mind  
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

## V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near  
Gaze at the gilded gear  
And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" . . .

## VI

Well: while was fashioning  
This creature of cleaving wing,  
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

## VII

Prepared a sinister mate  
For her — so gaily great -  
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

## VIII

And as the smart ship grew  
In stature, grace, and hue,  
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

## **IX**

Alien they seemed to be:  
No mortal eye could see  
The intimate welding of their later history,

## **X**

Or sign that they were bent  
By paths coincident  
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

## **XI**

Till the Spinner of the Years  
Said "Now!" And each one hears,  
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

## **THE GHOST OF THE PAST**

We two kept house, the Past and I,  
The Past and I;  
I tended while it hovered nigh,  
Leaving me never alone.  
It was a spectral housekeeping  
Where fell no jarring tone,  
As strange, as still a housekeeping  
As ever has been known.

As daily I went up the stair  
And down the stair,  
I did not mind the Bygone there -  
The Present once to me;  
Its moving meek companionship  
I wished might ever be,  
There was in that companionship  
Something of ecstasy.

It dwelt with me just as it was,  
Just as it was  
When first its prospects gave me pause  
In wayward wanderings,  
Before the years had torn old troths  
As they tear all sweet things,  
Before gaunt griefs had torn old troths  
And dulled old rapturings.

And then its form began to fade,  
Began to fade,  
Its gentle echoes faintlier played  
At eves upon my ear  
Than when the autumn's look embrowned  
The lonely chambers here,  
The autumn's settling shades embrowned  
Nooks that it haunted near.

And so with time my vision less,  
Yea, less and less  
Makes of that Past my housemistress,  
It dwindles in my eye;  
It looms a far-off skeleton  
And not a comrade nigh,  
A fitful far-off skeleton  
Dimming as days draw by.

## AFTER THE VISIT

(To F. E. D.)

Come again to the place  
Where your presence was as a leaf that skims  
Down a drouthy way whose ascent bedims  
The bloom on the farer's face.

Come again, with the feet  
That were light on the green as a thistledown ball,  
And those mute ministrations to one and to all  
Beyond a man's saying sweet.

Until then the faint scent  
Of the bordering flowers swam unheeded away,  
And I marked not the charm in the changes of day  
As the cloud-colours came and went.

Through the dark corridors  
Your walk was so soundless I did not know  
Your form from a phantom's of long ago  
Said to pass on the ancient floors,  
Till you drew from the shade,  
And I saw the large luminous living eyes  
Regard me in fixed inquiring-wise  
As those of a soul that weighed,  
Scarce consciously,  
The eternal question of what Life was,  
And why we were there, and by whose strange laws  
That which mattered most could not be.

## **TO MEET, OR OTHERWISE**

Whether to sally and see thee, girl of my dreams,  
Or whether to stay  
And see thee not! How vast the difference seems  
Of Yea from Nay  
Just now. Yet this same sun will slant its beams  
At no far day  
On our two mounds, and then what will the difference weigh!  
Yet I will see thee, maiden dear, and make  
The most I can  
Of what remains to us amid this brake Cimmerian  
Through which we grope, and from whose thorns we ache,  
While still we scan  
Round our frail faltering progress for some path or plan.  
By briefest meeting something sure is won;  
It will have been:  
Nor God nor Daemon can undo the done,  
Unseen the seen,  
Make muted music be as unbegun,  
Though things terrene  
Groan in their bondage till oblivion supervene.



So, to the one long-sweeping symphony  
From times remote  
Till now, of human tenderness, shall we  
Supply one note,  
Small and untraced, yet that will ever be  
Somewhere afloat  
Amid the spheres, as part of sick Life's antidote.

## THE DIFFERENCE

### I

Sinking down by the gate I discern the thin moon,  
And a blackbird tries over old airs in the pine,  
But the moon is a sorry one, sad the bird's tune,  
For this spot is unknown to that Heartmate of mine.

### II

Did my Heartmate but haunt here at times such as now,  
The song would be joyous and cheerful the moon;  
But she will see never this gate, path, or bough,  
Nor I find a joy in the scene or the tune.

## THE SUN ON THE BOOKCASE

(Student's Love-song)

Once more the cauldron of the sun  
Smears the bookcase with winy red,  
And here my page is, and there my bed,  
And the apple-tree shadows travel along.  
Soon their intangible track will be run,  
And dusk grow strong  
And they be fled.

Yes: now the boiling ball is gone,  
And I have wasted another day . . .  
But wasted — WASTED, do I say?  
Is it a waste to have imaged one  
Beyond the hills there, who, anon,  
My great deeds done  
Will be mine always?

## WHEN I SET OUT FOR LYONNESSE

When I set out for Lyonnaise,  
A hundred miles away,  
The rime was on the spray,  
And starlight lit my lonesomeness  
When I set out for Lyonnaise  
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonnaise  
While I should sojourn there  
No prophet durst declare,  
Nor did the wisest wizard guess  
What would bechance at Lyonnaise  
While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonnaise  
With magic in my eyes,  
None managed to surmise  
What meant my godlike gloriousness,  
When I came back from Lyonnaise  
With magic in my eyes.

## A THUNDERSTORM IN TOWN

(A Reminiscence)

She wore a new "terra-cotta" dress,  
And we stayed, because of the pelting storm,  
Within the hansom's dry recess,  
Though the horse had stopped; yea, motionless  
We sat on, snug and warm.

Then the downpour ceased, to my sharp sad pain,  
And the glass that had screened our forms before  
Flew up, and out she sprang to her door:  
I should have kissed her if the rain  
Had lasted a minute more.

# THE TORN LETTER

## I

I tore your letter into strips  
No bigger than the airy feathers  
That ducks preen out in changing weathers  
Upon the shifting ripple-tips.

## II

In darkness on my bed alone  
I seemed to see you in a vision,  
And hear you say: "Why this derision  
Of one drawn to you, though unknown?"

## III

Yes, eve's quick mood had run its course,  
The night had cooled my hasty madness;  
I suffered a regretful sadness  
Which deepened into real remorse.

## IV

I thought what pensive patient days  
A soul must know of grain so tender,  
How much of good must grace the sender  
Of such sweet words in such bright phrase.

## V

Uprising then, as things unpriced  
I sought each fragment, patched and mended;  
The midnight whitened ere I had ended  
And gathered words I had sacrificed.

## VI

But some, alas, of those I threw  
Were past my search, destroyed for ever:  
They were your name and place; and never  
Did I regain those clues to you.

## VII

I learnt I had missed, by rash unheed,  
My track; that, so the Will decided,  
In life, death, we should be divided,  
And at the sense I ached indeed.

VIII

That ache for you, born long ago,  
Throbs on; I never could outgrow it.  
What a revenge, did you but know it!  
But that, thank God, you do not know.

## BEYOND THE LAST LAMP

(Near Tooting Common)

I

While rain, with eve in partnership,  
Descended darkly, drip, drip, drip,  
Beyond the last lone lamp I passed  
Walking slowly, whispering sadly,  
Two linked loiterers, wan, downcast:  
Some heavy thought constrained each face,  
And blinded them to time and place.

II

The pair seemed lovers, yet absorbed  
In mental scenes no longer orb'd  
By love's young rays. Each countenance  
As it slowly, as it sadly  
Caught the lamplight's yellow glance  
Held in suspense a misery  
At things which had been or might be.

### III

When I retraced that watery way  
Some hours beyond the droop of day,  
Still I found pacing there the twain  
Just as slowly, just as sadly,  
Heedless of the night and rain.  
One could but wonder who they were  
And what wild woe detained them there.

### IV

Though thirty years of blur and blot  
Have slid since I beheld that spot,  
And saw in curious converse there  
Moving slowly, moving sadly  
That mysterious tragic pair,  
Its olden look may linger on -  
All but the couple; they have gone.

### V

Whither? Who knows, indeed . . . And yet  
To me, when nights are weird and wet,  
Without those comrades there at tryst  
Creeping slowly, creeping sadly,  
That lone lane does not exist.  
There they seem brooding on their pain,  
And will, while such a lane remain.

## THE FACE AT THE CASEMENT

If ever joy leave  
An abiding sting of sorrow,  
So befell it on the morrow  
Of that May eve . . .

The travelled sun dropped  
To the north-west, low and lower,  
The pony's trot grew slower,  
And then we stopped.

"This cosy house just by  
I must call at for a minute,  
A sick man lies within it  
Who soon will die.

"He wished to marry me,  
So I am bound, when I drive near him,  
To inquire, if but to cheer him,  
How he may be."

A message was sent in,  
And wordlessly we waited,  
Till some one came and stated  
The bulletin.

And that the sufferer said,  
For her call no words could thank her;  
As his angel he must rank her  
Till life's spark fled.

Slowly we drove away,  
When I turned my head, although not  
Called; why so I turned I know not  
Even to this day.

And lo, there in my view  
Pressed against an upper lattice  
Was a white face, gazing at us  
As we withdrew.

And well did I divine  
It to be the man's there dying,  
Who but lately had been sighing  
For her pledged mine.

Then I deigned a deed of hell;  
It was done before I knew it;  
What devil made me do it  
I cannot tell!

Yes, while he gazed above,  
I put my arm about her  
That he might see, nor doubt her  
My plighted Love.

The pale face vanished quick,  
As if blasted, from the casement,  
And my shame and self-abasement  
Began their prick.

And they prick on, ceaselessly,  
For that stab in Love's fierce fashion  
Which, unfired by lover's passion,  
Was foreign to me.

She smiled at my caress,  
But why came the soft embowment  
Of her shoulder at that moment  
She did not guess.

Long long years has he lain  
In thy garth, O sad Saint Cleather:  
What tears there, bared to weather,  
Will cleanse that stain!

Love is long-suffering, brave,  
Sweet, prompt, precious as a jewel;  
But O, too, Love is cruel,  
Cruel as the grave.

## LOST LOVE

I play my sweet old airs -  
The airs he knew  
When our love was true -  
But he does not balk  
His determined walk,  
And passes up the stairs.

I sing my songs once more,  
And presently hear  
His footstep near  
As if it would stay;  
But he goes his way,  
And shuts a distant door.

So I wait for another morn  
And another night  
In this soul-sick blight;  
And I wonder much  
As I sit, why such  
A woman as I was born!

# MY SPIRIT WILL NOT HAUNT THE MOUND

My spirit will not haunt the mound  
Above my breast,  
But travel, memory-possessed,  
To where my tremulous being found  
Life largest, best.

My phantom-footed shape will go  
When nightfall grays  
Hither and thither along the ways  
I and another used to know  
In backward days.

And there you'll find me, if a jot  
You still should care  
For me, and for my curious air;  
If otherwise, then I shall not,  
For you, be there.

## WESSEX HEIGHTS (1896)

There are some heights in Wessex, shaped as if by a kindly hand  
For thinking, dreaming, dying on, and at crises when I stand,  
Say, on Ingpen Beacon eastward, or on Wyls-Neck westwardly,  
I seem where I was before my birth, and after death may be.

In the lowlands I have no comrade, not even the lone man's friend -  
Her who suffereth long and is kind; accepts what he is too weak to  
mend:

Down there they are dubious and askance; there nobody thinks as I,  
But mind-chains do not clank where one's next neighbour is the sky.

In the towns I am tracked by phantoms having weird detective ways -  
Shadows of beings who fellowed with myself of earlier days:  
They hang about at places, and they say harsh heavy things -  
Men with a frigid sneer, and women with tart disparagings.

Down there I seem to be false to myself, my simple self that was,  
And is not now, and I see him watching, wondering what crass cause  
Can have merged him into such a strange continuator as this,  
Who yet has something in common with himself, my chrysalis.



I cannot go to the great grey Plain; there's a figure against the moon,  
Nobody sees it but I, and it makes my breast beat out of tune;  
I cannot go to the tall-spired town, being barred by the forms now passed  
For everybody but me, in whose long vision they stand there fast.

There's a ghost at Yell'ham Bottom chiding loud at the fall of the night,  
There's a ghost in Froom-side Vale, thin lipped and vague, in a shroud of white,  
There is one in the railway-train whenever I do not want it near,  
I see its profile against the pane, saying what I would not hear.

As for one rare fair woman, I am now but a thought of hers,  
I enter her mind and another thought succeeds me that she prefers;  
Yet my love for her in its fulness she herself even did not know;  
Well, time cures hearts of tenderness, and now I can let her go.

So I am found on Ingpen Beacon, or on Wyls-Neck to the west,  
Or else on homely Bulbarrow, or little Pilsdon Crest,  
Where men have never cared to haunt, nor women have walked with me,  
And ghosts then keep their distance; and I know some liberty.

## IN DEATH DIVIDED

### I

I shall rot here, with those whom in their day  
You never knew,  
And alien ones who, ere they chilled to clay,  
Met not my view,  
Will in your distant grave-place ever neighbour you.

### II

No shade of pinnacle or tree or tower,  
While earth endures,  
Will fall on my mound and within the hour  
Steal on to yours;  
One robin never haunt our two green covertures.

### **III**

Some organ may resound on Sunday noons  
By where you lie,  
Some other thrill the panes with other tunes  
Where moulder I;  
No selfsame chords compose our common lullaby.

### **IV**

The simply-cut memorial at my head  
Perhaps may take  
A Gothic form, and that above your bed  
Be Greek in make;  
No linking symbol show thereon for our tale's sake.

### **V**

And in the monotonous moils of strained, hard-run  
Humanity,  
The eternal tie which binds us twain in one  
No eye will see  
Stretching across the miles that sever you from me.

## **THE PLACE ON THE MAP**

### **I**

I look upon the map that hangs by me -  
Its shires and towns and rivers lined in varnished artistry -  
And I mark a jutting height  
Coloured purple, with a margin of blue sea.

### **II**

— 'Twas a day of latter summer, hot and dry;  
Ay, even the waves seemed drying as we walked on, she and I,  
By this spot where, calmly quite,  
She informed me what would happen by and by.

### III

This hanging map depicts the coast and place,  
And resuscitates therewith our unexpected troublous case  
All distinctly to my sight,  
And her tension, and the aspect of her face.

### IV

Weeks and weeks we had loved beneath that blazing blue,  
Which had lost the art of raining, as her eyes to-day had too,  
While she told what, as by sleight,  
Shot our firmament with rays of ruddy hue.

### V

For the wonder and the wormwood of the whole  
Was that what in realms of reason would have joyed our double soul  
Wore a torrid tragic light  
Under order-keeping's rigorous control.

### VI

So, the map revives her words, the spot, the time,  
And the thing we found we had to face before the next year's prime;  
The charted coast stares bright,  
And its episode comes back in pantomime.

## WHERE THE PICNIC WAS

Where we made the fire,  
In the summer time,  
Of branch and briar  
On the hill to the sea  
I slowly climb  
Through winter mire,  
And scan and trace  
The forsaken place  
Quite readily.

Now a cold wind blows,  
And the grass is gray,  
But the spot still shows  
As a burnt circle — aye,  
And stick-ends, charred,  
Still strew the sward  
Whereon I stand,  
Last relic of the band  
Who came that day!

Yes, I am here  
Just as last year,  
And the sea breathes brine  
From its strange straight line  
Up hither, the same  
As when we four came.  
- But two have wandered far  
From this grassy rise  
Into urban roar  
Where no picnics are,  
And one — has shut her eyes  
For evermore.

#### THE SCHRECKHORN

(With thoughts of Leslie Stephen)

(June 1897)

Aloof, as if a thing of mood and whim;  
Now that its spare and desolate figure gleams  
Upon my nearing vision, less it seems  
A looming Alp-height than a guise of him  
Who scaled its horn with ventured life and limb,  
Drawn on by vague imaginings, maybe,  
Of semblance to his personality  
In its quaint glooms, keen lights, and rugged trim.

At his last change, when Life's dull coils unwind,  
Will he, in old love, hitherward escape,  
And the eternal essence of his mind  
Enter this silent adamant shape,  
And his low voicing haunt its slipping snows  
When dawn that calls the climber dyes them rose?

# A SINGER ASLEEP

(Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1837-1909)

## I

In this fair niche above the unslumbering sea,  
That sentrys up and down all night, all day,  
From cove to promontory, from ness to bay,  
The Fates have fitly bidden that he should be Pillowed eternally.

## II

- It was as though a garland of red roses  
Had fallen about the hood of some smug nun  
When irresponsibly dropped as from the sun,  
In fulth of numbers freaked with musical closes,  
Upon Victoria's formal middle time  
His leaves of rhythm and rhyme.

## III

O that far morning of a summer day  
When, down a terraced street whose pavements lay  
Glassing the sunshine into my bent eyes,  
I walked and read with a quick glad surprise  
New words, in classic guise, -

## IV

The passionate pages of his earlier years,  
Fraught with hot sighs, sad laughters, kisses, tears;  
Fresh-fluted notes, yet from a minstrel who  
Blew them not naively, but as one who knew  
Full well why thus he blew.

## V

I still can hear the brabble and the roar  
At those thy tunes, O still one, now passed through  
That fitful fire of tongues then entered new!  
Their power is spent like spindrift on this shore;  
Thine swells yet more and more.

## VI

- His singing-mistress verily was no other  
Than she the Lesbian, she the music-mother  
Of all the tribe that feel in melodies;  
Who leapt, love-anguished, from the Leucadian steep  
Into the rambling world-encircling deep  
Which hides her where none sees.

## VII

And one can hold in thought that nightly here  
His phantom may draw down to the water's brim,  
And hers come up to meet it, as a dim  
Lone shine upon the heaving hydrosphere,  
And mariners wonder as they traverse near,  
Unknowing of her and him.

## VIII

One dreams him sighing to her spectral form:  
"O teacher, where lies hid thy burning line;  
Where are those songs, O poetess divine  
Whose very arts are love incarnadine?"  
And her smile back: "Disciple true and warm,  
Sufficient now are thine." . . .

## IX

So here, beneath the waking constellations,  
Where the waves peal their everlasting strains,  
And their dull subterrene reverberations  
Shake him when storms make mountains of their plains -  
Him once their peer in sad improvisations,  
And deft as wind to cleave their frothy manes -  
I leave him, while the daylight gleam declines  
Upon the capes and chines.

BONCHURCH, 1910.

## A PLAINT TO MAN

When you slowly emerged from the den of Time,  
And gained percipience as you grew,  
And fleshed you fair out of shapeless slime,

Wherefore, O Man, did there come to you  
The unhappy need of creating me -  
A form like your own — for praying to?

My virtue, power, utility,  
Within my maker must all abide,  
Since none in myself can ever be,

One thin as a shape on a lantern-slide  
Shown forth in the dark upon some dim sheet,  
And by none but its showman vivified.

“Such a forced device,” you may say, “is meet  
For easing a loaded heart at whiles:  
Man needs to conceive of a mercy-seat

Somewhere above the gloomy aisles  
Of this wailful world, or he could not bear  
The irk no local hope beguiles.”

- But since I was framed in your first despair  
The doing without me has had no play  
In the minds of men when shadows scare;

And now that I dwindle day by day  
Beneath the deicide eyes of seers  
In a light that will not let me stay,

And to-morrow the whole of me disappears,  
The truth should be told, and the fact be faced  
That had best been faced in earlier years:

The fact of life with dependence placed  
On the human heart's resource alone,  
In brotherhood bonded close and graced

With loving-kindness fully blown,  
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

1909-10.

# GOD'S FUNERAL

## I

I saw a slowly-stepping train -  
Lined on the brows, scoop-eyed and bent and hoar -  
Following in files across a twilit plain  
A strange and mystic form the foremost bore.

## II

And by contagious throbs of thought  
Or latent knowledge that within me lay  
And had already stirred me, I was wrought  
To consciousness of sorrow even as they.

## III

The fore-borne shape, to my blurred eyes,  
At first seemed man-like, and anon to change  
To an amorphous cloud of marvellous size,  
At times endowed with wings of glorious range.

## IV

And this phantasmal variousness  
Ever possessed it as they drew along:  
Yet throughout all it symbolized none the less  
Potency vast and loving-kindness strong.

## V

Almost before I knew I bent  
Towards the moving columns without a word;  
They, growing in bulk and numbers as they went,  
Struck out sick thoughts that could be overheard:-

## VI

"O man-projected Figure, of late  
Imaged as we, thy knell who shall survive?  
Whence came it we were tempted to create  
One whom we can no longer keep alive?"

## VII



"Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,  
We gave him justice as the ages rolled,  
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,  
And longsuffering, and mercies manifold.

### VIII

"And, tricked by our own early dream  
And need of solace, we grew self-deceived,  
Our making soon our maker did we deem,  
And what we had imagined we believed.

### IX

"Till, in Time's stayless stealthy swing,  
Uncompromising rude reality  
Mangled the Monarch of our fashioning,  
Who quavered, sank; and now has ceased to be.

### X

"So, toward our myth's oblivion,  
Darkling, and languid-lipped, we creep and grope  
Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon,  
Whose Zion was a still abiding hope.

### XI

"How sweet it was in years far hied  
To start the wheels of day with trustful prayer,  
To lie down liegely at the eventide  
And feel a blest assurance he was there!

### XII

"And who or what shall fill his place?  
Whither will wanderers turn distracted eyes  
For some fixed star to stimulate their pace  
Towards the goal of their enterprise?" . . .

### **XIII**

Some in the background then I saw,  
Sweet women, youths, men, all incredulous,  
Who chimed as one: "This figure is of straw,  
This requiem mockery! Still he lives to us!"

### **XIV**

I could not prop their faith: and yet  
Many I had known: with all I sympathized;  
And though struck speechless, I did not forget  
That what was mourned for, I, too, once had prized.

### **XV**

Still, how to bear such loss I deemed  
The insistent question for each animate mind,  
And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed  
A pale yet positive gleam low down behind,

### **XVI**

Whereof to lift the general night,  
A certain few who stood aloof had said,  
"See you upon the horizon that small light -  
Swelling somewhat?" Each mourner shook his head.

### **XVII**

And they composed a crowd of whom  
Some were right good, and many nigh the best . . .  
Thus dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom  
Mechanically I followed with the rest.

1908-10.

## **SPECTRES THAT GRIEVE**

"It is not death that harrows us," they lipped,  
"The soundless cell is in itself relief,  
For life is an unfenced flower, benumbed and nipped  
At unawares, and at its best but brief."

The speakers, sundry phantoms of the gone,  
Had risen like filmy flames of phosphor dye,  
As if the palest of sheet lightnings shone  
From the sward near me, as from a nether sky.

And much surprised was I that, spent and dead,  
They should not, like the many, be at rest,  
But stray as apparitions; hence I said,  
“Why, having slipped life, hark you back distressed?”

“We are among the few death sets not free,  
The hurt, misrepresented names, who come  
At each year’s brink, and cry to History  
To do them justice, or go past them dumb.

“We are stript of rights; our shames lie unredressed,  
Our deeds in full anatomy are not shown,  
Our words in morsels merely are expressed  
On the scripted page, our motives blurred, unknown.”

Then all these shaken slighted visitants sped  
Into the vague, and left me musing there  
On fames that well might instance what they had said,  
Until the New-Year’s dawn strode up the air.

## AH, ARE YOU DIGGING ON MY GRAVE?

“Ah, are you digging on my grave  
My loved one? — planting rue?”  
- “No: yesterday he went to wed  
One of the brightest wealth has bred.  
‘It cannot hurt her now,’ he said,  
‘That I should not be true.’”

“Then who is digging on my grave?  
My nearest dearest kin?”  
- “Ah, no; they sit and think, ‘What use!  
What good will planting flowers produce?  
No tendance of her mound can loose  
Her spirit from Death’s gin.’”

“But some one digs upon my grave?  
My enemy? — prodding sly?”  
- “Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate  
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,  
She thought you no more worth her hate,  
And cares not where you lie.”

“Then, who is digging on my grave?  
Say — since I have not guessed!”  
- “O it is I, my mistress dear,  
Your little dog, who still lives near,  
And much I hope my movements here  
Have not disturbed your rest?”  
“Ah, yes! YOU dig upon my grave . . .  
Why flashed it not on me  
That one true heart was left behind!  
What feeling do we ever find  
To equal among human kind  
A dog’s fidelity!”  
“Mistress, I dug upon your grave  
To bury a bone, in case  
I should be hungry near this spot  
When passing on my daily trot.  
I am sorry, but I quite forgot  
It was your resting-place.”

## **SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCES IN FIFTEEN GLIMPSES**

### **I — AT TEA**

The kettle descants in a cozy drone,  
And the young wife looks in her husband’s face,  
And then at her guest’s, and shows in her own  
Her sense that she fills an envied place;  
And the visiting lady is all abloom,  
And says there was never so sweet a room.  
And the happy young housewife does not know  
That the woman beside her was first his choice,  
Till the fates ordained it could not be so . . .  
Betraying nothing in look or voice  
The guest sits smiling and sips her tea,  
And he throws her a stray glance yearningly.

## II — IN CHURCH

“And now to God the Father,” he ends,  
And his voice thrills up to the topmost tiles:  
Each listener chokes as he bows and bends,  
And emotion pervades the crowded aisles.  
Then the preacher glides to the vestry-door,  
And shuts it, and thinks he is seen no more.

The door swings softly ajar meanwhile,  
And a pupil of his in the Bible class,  
Who adores him as one without gloss or guile,  
Sees her idol stand with a satisfied smile  
And re-enact at the vestry-glass  
Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show  
That had moved the congregation so.

## III — BY HER AUNT’S GRAVE

“Sixpence a week,” says the girl to her lover,  
“Aunt used to bring me, for she could confide  
In me alone, she vowed. ‘Twas to cover  
The cost of her headstone when she died.  
And that was a year ago last June;  
I’ve not yet fixed it. But I must soon.”

“And where is the money now, my dear?”  
“O, snug in my purse . . . Aunt was SO slow  
In saving it — eighty weeks, or near.” . . .  
“Let’s spend it,” he hints. “For she won’t know.  
There’s a dance to-night at the Load of Hay.”  
She passively nods. And they go that way.

## IV — IN THE ROOM OF THE BRIDE-ELECT

“Would it had been the man of our wish!”  
Sighs her mother. To whom with vehemence she  
In the wedding-dress — the wife to be -  
“Then why were you so mollyish  
As not to insist on him for me!”  
The mother, amazed: “Why, dearest one,  
Because you pleaded for this or none!”

“But Father and you should have stood out strong!  
Since then, to my cost, I have lived to find  
That you were right and that I was wrong;  
This man is a dolt to the one declined . . .  
Ah! — here he comes with his button-hole rose.  
Good God — I must marry him I suppose!”

## V — AT A WATERING-PLACE

They sit and smoke on the esplanade,  
The man and his friend, and regard the bay  
Where the far chalk cliffs, to the left displayed,  
Smile sallowly in the decline of day.  
And saunterers pass with laugh and jest -  
A handsome couple among the rest.  
“That smart proud pair,” says the man to his friend,  
“Are to marry next week . . . How little he thinks  
That dozens of days and nights on end  
I have stroked her neck, unhooked the links  
Of her sleeve to get at her upper arm . . .  
Well, bliss is in ignorance: what’s the harm!”

## VI — IN THE CEMETERY

“You see those mothers squabbling there?”  
Remarks the man of the cemetery.  
One says in tears, “Tis mine lies here!”  
Another, ‘Nay, mine, you Pharisee!’  
Another, ‘How dare you move my flowers  
And put your own on this grave of ours!’  
But all their children were laid therein  
At different times, like sprats in a tin.  
“And then the main drain had to cross,  
And we moved the lot some nights ago,  
And packed them away in the general foss  
With hundreds more. But their folks don’t know,  
And as well cry over a new-laid drain  
As anything else, to ease your pain!”

## VII — OUTSIDE THE WINDOW

“My stick!” he says, and turns in the lane  
To the house just left, whence a vixen voice  
Comes out with the firelight through the pane,  
And he sees within that the girl of his choice  
Stands rating her mother with eyes aglare  
For something said while he was there.

“At last I behold her soul undraped!”  
Thinks the man who had loved her more than himself;  
“My God — ’tis but narrowly I have escaped. -  
My precious porcelain proves it delf.”  
His face has reddened like one ashamed,  
And he steals off, leaving his stick unclaimed.

#### VIII — IN THE STUDY

He enters, and mute on the edge of a chair  
Sits a thin-faced lady, a stranger there,  
A type of decayed gentility;  
And by some small signs he well can guess  
That she comes to him almost breakfastless.

“I have called — I hope I do not err -  
I am looking for a purchaser  
Of some score volumes of the works  
Of eminent divines I own, -  
Left by my father — though it irks  
My patience to offer them.” And she smiles  
As if necessity were unknown;  
“But the truth of it is that oftenwhiles  
I have wished, as I am fond of art,  
To make my rooms a little smart.”  
And lightly still she laughs to him,  
As if to sell were a mere gay whim,  
And that, to be frank, Life were indeed  
To her not vinegar and gall,  
But fresh and honey-like; and Need  
No household skeleton at all.

## IX — AT THE ALTAR-RAIL

“My bride is not coming, alas!” says the groom,  
And the telegram shakes in his hand. “I own  
It was hurried! We met at a dancing-room  
When I went to the Cattle-Show alone,  
And then, next night, where the Fountain leaps,  
And the Street of the Quarter-Circle sweeps.

“Ay, she won me to ask her to be my wife -  
‘Twas foolish perhaps! — to forsake the ways  
Of the flaring town for a farmer’s life.  
She agreed. And we fixed it. Now she says:  
‘It’s sweet of you, dear, to prepare me a nest,  
But a swift, short, gay life suits me best.  
What I really am you have never gleaned;  
I had eaten the apple ere you were weaned.’”

## X — IN THE NUPTIAL CHAMBER

“O that mastering tune?” And up in the bed  
Like a lace-robed phantom springs the bride;  
“And why?” asks the man she had that day wed,  
With a start, as the band plays on outside.  
“It’s the townfolks’ cheery compliment  
Because of our marriage, my Innocent.”

“O but you don’t know! ‘Tis the passionate air  
To which my old Love waltzed with me,  
And I swore as we spun that none should share  
My home, my kisses, till death, save he!  
And he dominates me and thrills me through,  
And it’s he I embrace while embracing you!”

## XI — IN THE RESTAURANT

“But hear. If you stay, and the child be born,  
It will pass as your husband’s with the rest,  
While, if we fly, the teeth of scorn  
Will be gleaming at us from east to west;  
And the child will come as a life despised;  
I feel an elopement is ill-advised!”



“O you realise not what it is, my dear,  
To a woman! Daily and hourly alarms  
Lest the truth should out. How can I stay here,  
And nightly take him into my arms!  
Come to the child no name or fame,  
Let us go, and face it, and bear the shame.”

## **XII — AT THE DRAPER’S**

“I stood at the back of the shop, my dear,  
But you did not perceive me.  
Well, when they deliver what you were shown  
I shall know nothing of it, believe me!”

And he coughed and coughed as she paled and said,  
”O, I didn’t see you come in there -  
Why couldn’t you speak?” — ”Well, I didn’t. I left  
That you should not notice I’d been there.

“You were viewing some lovely things. ‘Soon required  
For a widow, of latest fashion’;  
And I knew ‘twould upset you to meet the man  
Who had to be cold and ashen

“And screwed in a box before they could dress you  
’In the last new note in mourning,’  
As they defined it. So, not to distress you,  
I left you to your adorning.”

## **XIII — ON THE DEATH-BED**

“I’ll tell — being past all praying for -  
Then promptly die . . . He was out at the war,  
And got some scent of the intimacy  
That was under way between her and me;  
And he stole back home, and appeared like a ghost  
One night, at the very time almost  
That I reached her house. Well, I shot him dead,  
And secretly buried him. Nothing was said.

“The news of the battle came next day;  
He was scheduled missing. I hurried away,  
Got out there, visited the field,  
And sent home word that a search revealed  
He was one of the slain; though, lying alone  
And stript, his body had not been known.

“But she suspected. I lost her love,  
Yea, my hope of earth, and of Heaven above;  
And my time’s now come, and I’ll pay the score,  
Though it be burning for evermore.”

#### **XIV — OVER THE COFFIN**

They stand confronting, the coffin between,  
His wife of old, and his wife of late,  
And the dead man whose they both had been  
Seems listening aloof, as to things past date.  
— ”I have called,” says the first. “Do you marvel or not?”  
“In truth,” says the second, “I do — somewhat.”  
“Well, there was a word to be said by me! . . .  
I divorced that man because of you -  
It seemed I must do it, boundenly;  
But now I am older, and tell you true,  
For life is little, and dead lies he;  
I would I had let alone you two!  
And both of us, scorning parochial ways,  
Had lived like the wives in the patriarchs’ days.”

#### **XV — IN THE MOONLIGHT**

“O lonely workman, standing there  
In a dream, why do you stare and stare  
At her grave, as no other grave there were?  
“If your great gaunt eyes so importune  
Her soul by the shine of this corpse-cold moon,  
Maybe you’ll raise her phantom soon!”  
“Why, fool, it is what I would rather see  
Than all the living folk there be;  
But alas, there is no such joy for me!”  
“Ah — she was one you loved, no doubt,  
Through good and evil, through rain and drought,  
And when she passed, all your sun went out?”  
“Nay: she was the woman I did not love,  
Whom all the others were ranked above,  
Whom during her life I thought nothing of.”

## LYRICS AND REVERIES (continued)

### SELF-UNCONSCIOUS

Along the way  
He walked that day,  
Watching shapes that reveries limn,  
And seldom he  
Had eyes to see  
The moment that encompassed him.

Bright yellowhammers  
Made mirthful clamours,  
And billed long straws with a bustling air,  
And bearing their load  
Flew up the road  
That he followed, alone, without interest there.

From bank to ground  
And over and round  
They sidled along the adjoining hedge;  
Sometimes to the gutter  
Their yellow flutter  
Would dip from the nearest slatestone ledge.

The smooth sea-line  
With a metal shine,  
And flashes of white, and a sail thereon,  
He would also descry  
With a half-wrapt eye  
Between the projects he mused upon.

Yes, round him were these  
Earth's artistries,  
But specious plans that came to his call  
Did most engage  
His pilgrimage,  
While himself he did not see at all.

Dead now as sherds  
Are the yellow birds,  
And all that mattered has passed away;  
Yet God, the Elf,  
Now shows him that self  
As he was, and should have been shown, that day.

O it would have been good  
Could he then have stood  
At a focussed distance, and conned the whole,  
But now such vision  
Is mere derision,  
Nor soothes his body nor saves his soul.

Not much, some may  
Incline to say,  
To see therein, had it all been seen.  
Nay! he is aware  
A thing was there  
That loomed with an immortal mien.

## THE DISCOVERY

I wandered to a crude coast  
Like a ghost;  
Upon the hills I saw fires -  
Funeral pyres  
Seemingly — and heard breaking  
Waves like distant cannonades that set the land shaking.

And so I never once guessed  
A Love-nest,  
Bowered and candle-lit, lay  
In my way,  
Till I found a hid hollow,  
Where I burst on her my heart could not but follow.

## TOLERANCE

“It is a foolish thing,” said I,  
“To bear with such, and pass it by;  
Yet so I do, I know not why!”

And at each clash I would surmise  
That if I had acted otherwise  
I might have saved me many sighs.

But now the only happiness  
In looking back that I possess -  
Whose lack would leave me comfortless -

Is to remember I refrained  
From masteries I might have gained,  
And for my tolerance was disdained;  
For see, a tomb. And if it were  
I had bent and broke, I should not dare  
To linger in the shadows there.

## **BEFORE AND AFTER SUMMER**

### **I**

Looking forward to the spring  
One puts up with anything.  
On this February day,  
Though the winds leap down the street,  
Wintry scourgings seem but play,  
And these later shafts of sleet  
— Sharper pointed than the first -  
And these later snows — the worst -  
Are as a half-transparent blind  
Riddled by rays from sun behind.

### **II**

Shadows of the October pine  
Reach into this room of mine:  
On the pine there stands a bird;  
He is shadowed with the tree.  
Mutely perched he bills no word;  
Blank as I am even is he.  
For those happy suns are past,  
Fore-discerned in winter last.  
When went by their pleasure, then?  
I, alas, perceived not when.

## **AT DAY-CLOSE IN NOVEMBER**

The ten hours' light is abating,  
And a late bird flies across,  
Where the pines, like waltzers waiting,  
Give their black heads a toss.

Beech leaves, that yellow the noon-time,  
Float past like specks in the eye;  
I set every tree in my June time,  
And now they obscure the sky.

And the children who ramble through here  
Conceive that there never has been  
A time when no tall trees grew here,  
A time when none will be seen.

## THE YEAR'S AWAKENING

How do you know that the pilgrim track  
Along the belting zodiac  
Swept by the sun in his seeming rounds  
Is traced by now to the Fishes' bounds  
And into the Ram, when weeks of cloud  
Have wrapt the sky in a clammy shroud,  
And never as yet a tinct of spring  
Has shown in the Earth's apparelling;  
O vespering bird, how do you know,  
How do you know?

How do you know, deep underground,  
Hid in your bed from sight and sound,  
Without a turn in temperature,  
With weather life can scarce endure,  
That light has won a fraction's strength,  
And day put on some moments' length,  
Whereof in merest rote will come,  
Weeks hence, mild airs that do not numb;  
O crocus root, how do you know,  
How do you know?

February 1910.

## UNDER THE WATERFALL

“Whenever I plunge my arm, like this,  
In a basin of water, I never miss  
The sweet sharp sense of a fugitive day  
Fetched back from its thickening shroud of gray.  
Hence the only prime  
And real love-rhyme  
That I know by heart,  
And that leaves no smart,  
Is the purl of a little valley fall  
About three spans wide and two spans tall  
Over a table of solid rock,  
And into a scoop of the self-same block;  
The purl of a runlet that never ceases  
In stir of kingdoms, in wars, in peaces;  
With a hollow boiling voice it speaks  
And has spoken since hills were turfless peaks.”

“And why gives this the only prime  
Idea to you of a real love-rhyme?  
And why does plunging your arm in a bowl  
Full of spring water, bring throbs to your soul?  
Well, under the fall, in a crease of the stone,  
Though where precisely none ever has known,  
Jammed darkly, nothing to show how prized,  
And by now with its smoothness opalised,  
Is a drinking-glass:  
For, down that pass  
My lover and I  
Walked under a sky  
Of blue with a leaf-woven awning of green,  
In the burn of August, to paint the scene,  
And we placed our basket of fruit and wine  
By the runlet’s rim, where we sat to dine;  
And when we had drunk from the glass together,  
Arched by the oak-copse from the weather,  
I held the vessel to rinse in the fall,  
Where it slipped, and sank, and was past recall,  
Though we stooped and plumbed the little abyss  
With long bared arms. There the glass still is.  
And, as said, if I thrust my arm below  
Cold water in basin or bowl, a throe  
From the past awakens a sense of that time,  
And the glass both used, and the cascade’s rhyme.  
The basin seems the pool, and its edge  
The hard smooth face of the brook-side ledge,  
And the leafy pattern of china-ware  
The hanging plants that were bathing there.  
By night, by day, when it shines or lours,  
There lies intact that chalice of ours,  
And its presence adds to the rhyme of love  
Persistently sung by the fall above.  
No lip has touched it since his and mine  
In turns therefrom sipped lovers’ wine.”



## THE SPELL OF THE ROSE

"I mean to build a hall anon,  
And shape two turrets there,  
And a broad newelled stair,  
And a cool well for crystal water;  
Yes; I will build a hall anon,  
Plant roses love shall feed upon,  
And apple trees and pear."

He set to build the manor-hall,  
And shaped the turrets there,  
And the broad newelled stair,  
And the cool well for crystal water;  
He built for me that manor-hall,  
And planted many trees withal,  
But no rose anywhere.

And as he planted never a rose  
That bears the flower of love,  
Though other flowers throve  
A frost-wind moved our souls to sever  
Since he had planted never a rose;  
And misconceits raised horrid shows,  
And agonies came thereof.

"I'll mend these miseries," then said I,  
And so, at dead of night,  
I went and, screened from sight,  
That nought should keep our souls in severance,  
I set a rose-bush. "This," said I,  
"May end divisions dire and wry,  
And long-drawn days of blight."

But I was called from earth — yea, called  
Before my rose-bush grew;  
And would that now I knew  
What feels he of the tree I planted,  
And whether, after I was called  
To be a ghost, he, as of old,  
Gave me his heart anew!

Perhaps now blooms that queen of trees  
I set but saw not grow,  
And he, beside its glow -  
Eyes couched of the mis-vision that blurred me -  
Ay, there beside that queen of trees  
He sees me as I was, though sees  
Too late to tell me so!

## ST. LAUNCE'S REVISITED

Slip back, Time!  
Yet again I am nearing  
Castle and keep, uprearing  
Gray, as in my prime.  
At the inn  
Smiling close, why is it  
Not as on my visit  
When hope and I were twin?  
Groom and jade  
Whom I found here, moulder;  
Strange the tavern-holder,  
Strange the tap-maid.  
Here I hired  
Horse and man for bearing  
Me on my wayfaring  
To the door desired.  
Evening gloomed  
As I journeyed forward  
To the faces shoreward,  
Till their dwelling loomed.  
If again  
Towards the Atlantic sea there  
I should speed, they'd be there  
Surely now as then? . . .  
Why waste thought,  
When I know them vanished  
Under earth; yea, banished  
Ever into nought.  
POEMS OF 1912-13  
Veteris vestigia flammae

## THE GOING

Why did you give no hint that night  
That quickly after the morrow's dawn,  
And calmly, as if indifferent quite,  
You would close your term here, up and be gone  
Where I could not follow  
With wing of swallow  
To gain one glimpse of you ever anon!

Never to bid good-bye,  
Or give me the softest call,  
Or utter a wish for a word, while I  
Saw morning harden upon the wall,  
Unmoved, unknowing  
That your great going  
Had place that moment, and altered all.

Why do you make me leave the house  
And think for a breath it is you I see  
At the end of the alley of bending boughs  
Where so often at dusk you used to be;  
Till in darkening dankness  
The yawning blankness  
Of the perspective sickens me!

You were she who abode  
By those red-veined rocks far West,  
You were the swan-necked one who rode  
Along the beetling Beeny Crest,  
And, reining nigh me,  
Would muse and eye me,  
While Life unrolled us its very best.

Why, then, latterly did we not speak,  
Did we not think of those days long dead,  
And ere your vanishing strive to seek  
That time's renewal? We might have said,  
"In this bright spring weather  
We'll visit together  
Those places that once we visited."

Well, well! All's past amend,  
Unchangeable. It must go.  
I seem but a dead man held on end  
To sink down soon . . . O you could not know  
That such swift fleeing  
No soul foreseeing -  
Not even I — would undo me so!  
December 1912.

## YOUR LAST DRIVE

Here by the moorway you returned,  
And saw the borough lights ahead  
That lit your face — all undiscerned  
To be in a week the face of the dead,  
And you told of the charm of that haloed view  
That never again would beam on you.

And on your left you passed the spot  
Where eight days later you were to lie,  
And be spoken of as one who was not;  
Beholding it with a cursory eye  
As alien from you, though under its tree  
You soon would halt everlastingly.

I drove not with you . . . Yet had I sat  
At your side that eve I should not have seen  
That the countenance I was glancing at  
Had a last-time look in the flickering sheen,  
Nor have read the writing upon your face,  
“I go hence soon to my resting-place;

“You may miss me then. But I shall not know  
How many times you visit me there,  
Or what your thoughts are, or if you go  
There never at all. And I shall not care.  
Should you censure me I shall take no heed  
And even your praises I shall not need.”

True: never you'll know. And you will not mind.  
But shall I then slight you because of such?  
Dear ghost, in the past did you ever find  
The thought “What profit?” move me much  
Yet the fact indeed remains the same,  
You are past love, praise, indifference, blame.

December 1912.

## **THE WALK**

You did not walk with me  
Of late to the hill-top tree  
By the gated ways,  
As in earlier days;  
You were weak and lame,  
So you never came,  
And I went alone, and I did not mind,  
Not thinking of you as left behind.

I walked up there to-day  
Just in the former way:  
Surveyed around  
The familiar ground  
By myself again:  
What difference, then?  
Only that underlying sense  
Of the look of a room on returning thence.

## **RAIN ON A GRAVE**

Clouds spout upon her  
Their waters amain  
In ruthless disdain, -  
Her who but lately  
Had shivered with pain  
As at touch of dishonour  
If there had lit on her  
So coldly, so straightly  
Such arrows of rain.

She who to shelter  
Her delicate head  
Would quicken and quicken  
Each tentative tread  
If drops chanced to pelt her  
That summertime spills  
In dust-paven rills  
When thunder-clouds thicken  
And birds close their bills.

Would that I lay there  
And she were housed here!  
Or better, together  
Were folded away there  
Exposed to one weather  
We both, — who would stray there  
When sunny the day there,  
Or evening was clear  
At the prime of the year.

Soon will be growing  
Green blades from her mound,  
And daises be showing  
Like stars on the ground,  
Till she form part of them -  
Ay — the sweet heart of them,  
Loved beyond measure  
With a child's pleasure  
All her life's round.

Jan. 31, 1913.

## **I FOUND HER OUT THERE**

I found her out there  
On a slope few see,  
That falls westwardly  
To the salt-edged air,  
Where the ocean breaks  
On the purple strand,  
And the hurricane shakes  
The solid land.

I brought her here,  
And have laid her to rest  
In a noiseless nest  
No sea beats near.  
She will never be stirred  
In her loamy cell  
By the waves long heard  
And loved so well.

So she does not sleep  
By those haunted heights  
The Atlantic smites  
And the blind gales sweep,  
Whence she often would gaze  
At Dundagel's far head,  
While the dipping blaze  
Dyed her face fire-red;

And would sigh at the tale  
Of sunk Lyonesse,  
As a wind-tugged tress  
Flapped her cheek like a flail;  
Or listen at whiles  
With a thought-bound brow  
To the murmuring miles  
She is far from now.

Yet her shade, maybe,  
Will creep underground  
Till it catch the sound  
Of that western sea  
As it swells and sobs  
Where she once domiciled,  
And joy in its throbs  
With the heart of a child.

## **WITHOUT CEREMONY**

It was your way, my dear,  
To be gone without a word  
When callers, friends, or kin  
Had left, and I hastened in  
To rejoin you, as I inferred.

And when you'd a mind to career  
Off anywhere — say to town -  
You were all on a sudden gone  
Before I had thought thereon,  
Or noticed your trunks were down.

So, now that you disappear  
For ever in that swift style,  
Your meaning seems to me  
Just as it used to be:  
“Good-bye is not worth while!”

## LAMENT

How she would have loved  
A party to-day! -  
Bright-hatted and gloved,  
With table and tray  
And chairs on the lawn  
Her smiles would have shone  
With welcomings . . . But  
She is shut, she is shut  
From friendship's spell  
In the jailing shell  
Of her tiny cell.

Or she would have reigned  
At a dinner to-night  
With ardours unfeigned,  
And a generous delight;  
All in her abode  
She'd have freely bestowed  
On her guests . . . But alas,  
She is shut under grass  
Where no cups flow,  
Powerless to know  
That it might be so.



And she would have sought  
With a child's eager glance  
The shy snowdrops brought  
By the new year's advance,  
And peered in the rime  
Of Candlemas-time  
For crocuses . . . chanced  
It that she were not tranced  
From sights she loved best;  
Wholly possessed  
By an infinite rest!

And we are here staying  
Amid these stale things  
Who care not for gaying,  
And those junketings  
That used so to joy her,  
And never to cloy her  
As us they cloy! . . . But  
She is shut, she is shut  
From the cheer of them, dead  
To all done and said  
In a yew-arched bed.

## THE HAUNTER

He does not think that I haunt here nightly:  
How shall I let him know  
That whither his fancy sets him wandering  
I, too, alertly go? -  
Hover and hover a few feet from him  
Just as I used to do,  
But cannot answer his words addressed me -  
Only listen thereto!

When I could answer he did not say them:  
When I could let him know  
How I would like to join in his journeys  
Seldom he wished to go.  
Now that he goes and wants me with him  
More than he used to do,  
Never he sees my faithful phantom  
Though he speaks thereto.

Yes, I accompany him to places  
Only dreamers know,  
Where the shy hares limp long paces,  
Where the night rooks go;  
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,  
Close as his shade can do,  
Always lacking the power to call to him,  
Near as I reach thereto!

What a good haunter I am, O tell him,  
Quickly make him know  
If he but sigh since my loss befell him  
Straight to his side I go.  
Tell him a faithful one is doing  
All that love can do  
Still that his path may be worth pursuing,  
And to bring peace thereto.

## THE VOICE

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,  
Saying that now you are not as you were  
When you had changed from the one who was all to me,  
But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,  
Standing as when I drew near to the town  
Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,  
Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness  
Travelling across the wet mead to me here,  
You being ever consigned to existlessness,  
Heard no more again far or near?

Thus I; faltering forward,  
Leaves around me falling,  
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward  
And the woman calling.

December 1912.

## HIS VISITOR

I come across from Mellstock while the moon wastes weaker  
To behold where I lived with you for twenty years and more:  
I shall go in the gray, at the passing of the mail-train,  
And need no setting open of the long familiar door  
As before.

The change I notice in my once own quarters!  
A brilliant budded border where the daisies used to be,  
The rooms new painted, and the pictures altered,  
And other cups and saucers, and no cozy nook for tea  
As with me.

I discern the dim faces of the sleep-wrapt servants;  
They are not those who tended me through feeble hours and strong,  
But strangers quite, who never knew my rule here,  
Who never saw me painting, never heard my softling song  
Float along.

So I don't want to linger in this re-decked dwelling,  
I feel too uneasy at the contrasts I behold,  
And I make again for Mellstock to return here never,  
And rejoin the roomy silence, and the mute and manifold  
Souls of old.

1913

## A CIRCULAR

As "legal representative"  
I read a missive not my own,  
On new designs the senders give  
For clothes, in tints as shown.

Here figure blouses, gowns for tea,  
And presentation-trains of state,  
Charming ball-dresses, millinery,  
Warranted up to date.

And this gay-pictured, spring-time shout  
Of Fashion, hails what lady proud?  
Her who before last year was out  
Was costumed in a shroud.

## A DREAM OR NO

Why go to Saint-Juliot? What's Juliot to me?  
I was but made fancy  
By some necromancy  
That much of my life claims the spot as its key.

Yes. I have had dreams of that place in the West,  
And a maiden abiding  
Thereat as in hiding;  
Fair-eyed and white-shouldered, broad-browed and brown-tressed.

And of how, coastward bound on a night long ago,  
There lonely I found her,  
The sea-birds around her,  
And other than nigh things uncaring to know.

So sweet her life there (in my thought has it seemed)  
That quickly she drew me  
To take her unto me,  
And lodge her long years with me. Such have I dreamed.

But nought of that maid from Saint-Juliot I see;  
Can she ever have been here,  
And shed her life's sheen here,  
The woman I thought a long housemate with me?

Does there even a place like Saint-Juliot exist?  
Or a Vallency Valley  
With stream and leafed alley,  
Or Beeny, or Bos with its flounce flinging mist?

February 1913.

## AFTER A JOURNEY

Hereto I come to interview a ghost;  
Whither, O whither will its whim now draw me?  
Up the cliff, down, till I'm lonely, lost,  
And the unseen waters' ejaculations awe me.  
Where you will next be there's no knowing,  
Facing round about me everywhere,  
With your nut-coloured hair,  
And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and going.

Yes: I have re-entered your olden haunts at last;  
Through the years, through the dead scenes I have tracked you;  
What have you now found to say of our past -  
Viewed across the dark space wherein I have lacked you?  
Summer gave us sweets, but autumn wrought division?  
Things were not lastly as firstly well  
With us twain, you tell?  
But all's closed now, despite Time's derision.

I see what you are doing: you are leading me on  
To the spots we knew when we haunted here together,  
The waterfall, above which the mist-bow shone  
At the then fair hour in the then fair weather,  
And the cave just under, with a voice still so hollow  
That it seems to call out to me from forty years ago,  
When you were all aglow,  
And not the thin ghost that I now frailly follow!

Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,  
The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily,  
Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,  
For the stars close their shutters and the dawn whitens hazily.  
Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours,  
The bringing me here; nay, bring me here again!  
I am just the same as when  
Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

PENTARGAN BAY.

## A DEATH-DAY RECALLED

Beeny did not quiver,  
Juliot grew not gray,  
Thin Valency's river  
Held its wonted way.  
Bos seemed not to utter  
Dimmest note of dirge,  
Targan mouth a mutter  
To its creamy surge.

Yet though these, unheeding,  
Listless, passed the hour  
Of her spirit's speeding,  
She had, in her flower,  
Sought and loved the places -  
Much and often pined  
For their lonely faces  
When in towns confined.

Why did not Valency  
In his purl deplore  
One whose haunts were whence he  
Drew his limpid store?  
Why did Bos not thunder,  
Targan apprehend  
Body and breath were sunder  
Of their former friend?

## **BEENY CLIFF**

March 1870 — March 1913

### **I**

O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,  
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free -  
The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.

### **II**

The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far away  
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say,  
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day.

### **III**

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised rain,  
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain,  
And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the main.

## IV

— Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to the sky,  
And shall she and I not go there once again now March is nigh,  
And the sweet things said in that March say anew there by and by?

## V

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird western shore,  
The woman now is — elsewhere — whom the ambling pony bore,  
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will see it nevermore.

## AT CASTLE BOTEREL

As I drive to the junction of lane and highway,  
And the drizzle bedrenches the waggonette,  
I look behind at the fading byway,  
And see on its slope, now glistening wet,  
Distinctly yet

Myself and a girlish form benighted  
In dry March weather. We climb the road  
Beside a chaise. We had just alighted  
To ease the sturdy pony's load  
When he sighed and slowed.

What we did as we climbed, and what we talked of  
Matters not much, nor to what it led, -  
Something that life will not be balked of  
Without rude reason till hope is dead,  
And feeling fled.

It filled but a minute. But was there ever  
A time of such quality, since or before,  
In that hill's story? To one mind never,  
Though it has been climbed, foot-swift, foot-sore,  
By thousands more.

Primaeval rocks form the road's steep border,  
And much have they faced there, first and last,  
Of the transitory in Earth's long order;  
But what they record in colour and cast  
Is — that we two passed.

And to me, though Time's unflinching rigour,  
In mindless rote, has ruled from sight  
The substance now, one phantom figure  
Remains on the slope, as when that night  
Saw us alight.

I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,  
I look back at it amid the rain  
For the very last time; for my sand is sinking,  
And I shall traverse old love's domain  
Never again.

March 1913.

## PLACES

Nobody says: Ah, that is the place  
Where chanced, in the hollow of years ago,  
What none of the Three Towns cared to know —  
The birth of a little girl of grace -  
The sweetest the house saw, first or last;  
Yet it was so  
On that day long past.

Nobody thinks: There, there she lay  
In a room by the Hoe, like the bud of a flower,  
And listened, just after the bedtime hour,  
To the stammering chimes that used to play  
The quaint Old Hundred-and-Thirteenth tune  
In Saint Andrew's tower  
Night, morn, and noon.

Nobody calls to mind that here  
Upon Boterel Hill, where the carters skid,  
With cheeks whose airy flush outbid  
Fresh fruit in bloom, and free of fear,  
She cantered down, as if she must fall  
(Though she never did),  
To the charm of all.



Nay: one there is to whom these things,  
That nobody else's mind calls back,  
Have a savour that scenes in being lack,  
And a presence more than the actual brings;  
To whom to-day is beneaped and stale,  
And its urgent clack  
But a vapid tale.

PLYMOUTH, March 1913.

## THE PHANTOM HORSEWOMAN

### I

Queer are the ways of a man I know:  
He comes and stands  
In a careworn craze,  
And looks at the sands  
And the seaward haze,  
With moveless hands  
And face and gaze,  
Then turns to go . . .  
And what does he see when he gazes so?

### II

They say he sees as an instant thing  
More clear than to-day,  
A sweet soft scene  
That once was in play  
By that briny green;  
Yes, notes alway  
Warm, real, and keen,  
What his back years bring -  
A phantom of his own figuring.

### III

Of this vision of his they might say more:  
Not only there  
Does he see this sight,  
But everywhere  
In his brain — day, night,  
As if on the air  
It were drawn rose bright -  
Yea, far from that shore  
Does he carry this vision of heretofore:

### IV

A ghost-girl-rider. And though, toil-tried,  
He withers daily,  
Time touches her not,  
But she still rides gaily  
In his rapt thought  
On that shagged and shaly  
Atlantic spot,  
And as when first eyed  
Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide.

## MISCELLANEOUS PIECES

### THE WISTFUL LADY

‘Love, while you were away there came to me -  
From whence I cannot tell -  
A plaintive lady pale and passionless,  
Who bent her eyes upon me critically,  
And weighed me with a wearing wistfulness,  
As if she knew me well.”

“I saw no lady of that wistful sort  
As I came riding home.  
Perhaps she was some dame the Fates constrain  
By memories sadder than she can support,  
Or by unhappy vacancy of brain,  
To leave her roof and roam?”

“Ah, but she knew me. And before this time  
I have seen her, lending ear  
To my light outdoor words, and pondering each,  
Her frail white finger swayed in pantomime,  
As if she fain would close with me in speech,  
And yet would not come near.

“And once I saw her beckoning with her hand  
As I came into sight  
At an upper window. And I at last went out;  
But when I reached where she had seemed to stand,  
And wandered up and down and searched about,  
I found she had vanished quite.”

Then thought I how my dead Love used to say,  
With a small smile, when she  
Was waning wan, that she would hover round  
And show herself after her passing day  
To any newer Love I might have found,  
But show her not to me.

## **THE WOMAN IN THE RYE**

“Why do you stand in the dripping rye,  
Cold-lipped, unconscious, wet to the knee,  
When there are firesides near?” said I.  
“I told him I wished him dead,” said she.

“Yea, cried it in my haste to one  
Whom I had loved, whom I well loved still;  
And die he did. And I hate the sun,  
And stand here lonely, aching, chill;

“Stand waiting, waiting under skies  
That blow reproach, the while I see  
The rooks sheer off to where he lies  
Wrapt in a peace withheld from me.”

## THE CHEVAL-GLASS

Why do you harbour that great cheval-glass  
Filling up your narrow room?  
You never preen or plume,  
Or look in a week at your full-length figure -  
Picture of bachelor gloom!

“Well, when I dwelt in ancient England,  
Renting the valley farm,  
Thoughtless of all heart-harm,  
I used to gaze at the parson’s daughter,  
A creature of nameless charm.

“Thither there came a lover and won her,  
Carried her off from my view.  
O it was then I knew  
Misery of a cast undreamt of -  
More than, indeed, my due!

“Then far rumours of her ill-usage  
Came, like a chilling breath  
When a man languisheth;  
Followed by news that her mind lost balance,  
And, in a space, of her death.

“Soon sank her father; and next was the auction -  
Everything to be sold:  
Mid things new and old  
Stood this glass in her former chamber,  
Long in her use, I was told.

“Well, I awaited the sale and bought it . . .  
There by my bed it stands,  
And as the dawn expands  
Often I see her pale-faced form there  
Brushing her hair’s bright bands.

“There, too, at pallid midnight moments  
Quick she will come to my call,  
Smile from the frame withal  
Ponderingly, as she used to regard me  
Passing her father’s wall.

“So that it was for its revelations  
I brought it oversea,  
And drag it about with me . . .  
Anon I shall break it and bury its fragments  
Where my grave is to be.”

## THE RE-ENACTMENT

Between the folding sea-downs,  
In the gloom  
Of a wailful wintry nightfall,  
When the boom  
Of the ocean, like a hammering in a hollow tomb,  
Throbbled up the copse-clothed valley  
From the shore  
To the chamber where I darkled,  
Sunk and sore  
With gray ponderings why my Loved one had not come before  
To salute me in the dwelling  
That of late  
I had hired to waste a while in -  
Vague of date,  
Quaint, and remote — wherein I now expectant sate;  
On the solitude, unsignalled,  
Broke a man  
Who, in air as if at home there,  
Seemed to scan  
Every fire-flecked nook of the apartment span by span.  
A stranger's and no lover's  
Eyes were these,  
Eyes of a man who measures  
What he sees  
But vaguely, as if wrapt in filmy phantasies.  
Yea, his bearing was so absent  
As he stood,  
It bespoke a chord so plaintive  
In his mood,  
That soon I judged he would not wrong my quietude.  
"Ah — the supper is just ready,"  
Then he said,  
"And the years'-long binned Madeira  
Flashes red!"  
(There was no wine, no food, no supper-table spread.)  
"You will forgive my coming,  
Lady fair?  
I see you as at that time  
Rising there,  
The self-same curious querying in your eyes and air.

"Yet no. How so? You wear not  
 The same gown,  
 Your locks show woful difference,  
 Are not brown:  
 What, is it not as when I hither came from town?  
 "And the place . . . But you seem other -  
 Can it be?  
 What's this that Time is doing  
 Unto me?  
 YOU dwell here, unknown woman? . . . Whereabouts, then, is she?  
 "And the house — things are much shifted. -  
 Put them where  
 They stood on this night's fellow;  
 Shift her chair:  
 Here was the couch: and the piano should be there."  
 I indulged him, verily nerve-strained  
 Being alone,  
 And I moved the things as bidden,  
 One by one,  
 And feigned to push the old piano where he had shown.  
 "Aha — now I can see her!  
 Stand aside:  
 Don't thrust her from the table  
 Where, meek-eyed,  
 She makes attempt with matron-manners to preside.  
 "She serves me: now she rises,  
 Goes to play . . .  
 But you obstruct her, fill her  
 With dismay,  
 And embarrassed, scared, she vanishes away!"  
 And, as 'twere useless longer  
 To persist,  
 He sighed, and sought the entry  
 Ere I wist,  
 And retreated, disappearing soundless in the mist.  
 That here some mighty passion  
 Once had burned,  
 Which still the walls enghosted,  
 I discerned,  
 And that by its strong spell mine might be overturned.

I sat depressed; till, later,  
My Love came;  
But something in the chamber  
Dimmed our flame, -  
An emanation, making our due words fall tame,  
    As if the intenser drama  
Shown me there  
Of what the walls had witnessed  
Filled the air,  
And left no room for later passion anywhere.  
    So came it that our fervours  
Did quite fail  
Of future consummation -  
Being made quail  
By the weird witchery of the parlour's hidden tale,  
    Which I, as years passed, faintly  
Learnt to trace, -  
One of sad love, born full-winged  
In that place  
Where the predestined sorrowers first stood face to face.  
    And as that month of winter  
Circles round,  
And the evening of the date-day  
Grows embrowned,  
I am conscious of those presences, and sit spellbound.  
    There, often — lone, forsaken -  
Queries breed  
Within me; whether a phantom  
Had my heed  
On that strange night, or was it some wrecked heart indeed?

## **HER SECRET**

That love's dull smart distressed my heart  
He shrewdly learnt to see,  
But that I was in love with a dead man  
Never suspected he.  
    He searched for the trace of a pictured face,  
He watched each missive come,  
And a note that seemed like a love-line  
Made him look frozen and glum.

He dogged my feet to the city street,  
He followed me to the sea,  
But not to the neighbouring churchyard  
Did he dream of following me.

## **SHE CHARGED ME**

She charged me with having said this and that  
To another woman long years before,  
In the very parlour where we sat, -  
Sat on a night when the endless pour  
Of rain on the roof and the road below  
Bent the spring of the spirit more and more . . .

- So charged she me; and the Cupid's bow  
Of her mouth was hard, and her eyes, and her face,  
And her white forefinger lifted slow.

Had she done it gently, or shown a trace  
That not too curiously would she view  
A folly passed ere her reign had place,  
A kiss might have ended it. But I knew  
From the fall of each word, and the pause between,  
That the curtain would drop upon us two  
Ere long, in our play of slave and queen.

## **THE NEWCOMER'S WIFE**

He paused on the sill of a door ajar  
That screened a lively liquor-bar,  
For the name had reached him through the door  
Of her he had married the week before.

“We called her the Hack of the Parade;  
But she was discreet in the games she played;  
If slightly worn, she's pretty yet,  
And gossips, after all, forget.

“And he knows nothing of her past;  
I am glad the girl's in luck at last;  
Such ones, though stale to native eyes,  
Newcomers snatch at as a prize.”



“Yes, being a stranger he sees her blent  
Of all that’s fresh and innocent,  
Nor dreams how many a love-campaign  
She had enjoyed before his reign!”

That night there was the splash of a fall  
Over the slimy harbour-wall:  
They searched, and at the deepest place  
Found him with crabs upon his face.

## A CONVERSATION AT DAWN

He lay awake, with a harassed air,  
And she, in her cloud of loose lank hair,  
Seemed trouble-trying  
As the dawn drew in on their faces there.

The chamber looked far over the sea  
From a white hotel on a white-stoned quay,  
And stepping a stride  
He parted the window-drapery.

Above the level horizon spread  
The sunrise, firing them foot to head  
From its smouldering lair,  
And painting their pillows with dyes of red.

“What strange disquiets have stirred you, dear,  
This dragging night, with starts in fear  
Of me, as it were,  
Or of something evil hovering near?”

“My husband, can I have fear of you?  
What should one fear from a man whom few,  
Or none, had matched  
In that late long spell of delays undue!”

He watched her eyes in the heaving sun:  
“Then what has kept, O reticent one,  
Those lids unlatched -  
Anything promised I’ve not yet done?”

“O it’s not a broken promise of yours  
(For what quite lightly your lip assures  
The due time brings)  
That has troubled my sleep, and no waking cures!” . . .

“I have shaped my will; ‘tis at hand,” said he;  
“I subscribe it to-day, that no risk there be  
In the hap of things  
Of my leaving you menaced by poverty.”

“That a boon provision I’m safe to get,  
Signed, sealed by my lord as it were a debt,  
I cannot doubt,  
Or ever this peering sun be set.”

“But you flung my arms away from your side,  
And faced the wall. No month-old bride  
Ere the tour be out  
In an air so loth can be justified?

“Ah — had you a male friend once loved well,  
Upon whose suit disaster fell  
And frustrance swift?  
Honest you are, and may care to tell.”

She lay impassive, and nothing broke  
The stillness other than, stroke by stroke,  
The lazy lift  
Of the tide below them; till she spoke:

“I once had a friend — a Love, if you will -  
Whose wife forsook him, and sank until  
She was made a thrall  
In a prison-cell for a deed of ill . . .

“He remained alone; and we met — to love,  
But barring legitimate joy thereof  
Stood a doorless wall,  
Though we prized each other all else above.

“And this was why, though I’d touched my prime,  
I put off suitors from time to time -  
Yourself with the rest -  
Till friends, who approved you, called it crime,

“And when misgivings weighed on me  
In my lover’s absence, hurriedly,  
And much distrest,  
I took you . . . Ah, that such could be! . . .

“Now, saw you when crossing from yonder shore  
At yesternoon, that the packet bore  
On a white-wreathed bier  
A coffined body towards the fore?

“Well, while you stood at the other end,  
The loungers talked, and I could but lend  
A listening ear,  
For they named the dead. ‘Twas the wife of my friend.

“He was there, but did not note me, veiled,  
Yet I saw that a joy, as of one unjailed,  
Now shone in his gaze;  
He knew not his hope of me just had failed!

“They had brought her home: she was born in this isle;  
And he will return to his domicile,  
And pass his days  
Alone, and not as he dreamt erstwhile!”

“ — So you’ve lost a sprucer spouse than I!”  
She held her peace, as if fain deny  
She would indeed  
For his pleasure’s sake, but could lip no lie.

“One far less formal and plain and slow!”  
She let the laconic assertion go  
As if of need  
She held the conviction that it was so.

“Regard me as his he always should,  
He had said, and wed me he vowed he would  
In his prime or sere  
Most verily do, if ever he could.

“And this fulfilment is now his aim,  
For a letter, addressed in my maiden name,  
Has dogged me here,  
Reminding me faithfully of his claim.

“And it started a hope like a lightning-streak  
That I might go to him — say for a week -  
And afford you right  
To put me away, and your vows unspeak.

“To be sure you have said, as of dim intent,  
That marriage is a plain event  
Of black and white,  
Without any ghost of sentiment,

“And my heart has quailed. — But deny it true  
That you will never this lock undo!  
No God intends  
To thwart the yearning He’s father to!”

The husband hemmed, then blandly bowed  
 In the light of the angry morning cloud.  
 "So my idyll ends,  
 And a drama opens!" he mused aloud;  
 And his features froze. "You may take it as true  
 That I will never this lock undo  
 For so depraved  
 A passion as that which kindles you."  
 Said she: "I am sorry you see it so;  
 I had hoped you might have let me go,  
 And thus been saved  
 The pain of learning there's more to know."  
 "More? What may that be? Gad, I think  
 You have told me enough to make me blink!  
 Yet if more remain  
 Then own it to me. I will not shrink!"  
 "Well, it is this. As we could not see  
 That a legal marriage could ever be,  
 To end our pain  
 We united ourselves informally;  
 "And vowed at a chancel-altar nigh,  
 With book and ring, a lifelong tie;  
 A contract vain  
 To the world, but real to Him on High."  
 "And you became as his wife?" — "I did." -  
 He stood as stiff as a caryatid,  
 And said, "Indeed! . . .  
 No matter. You're mine, whatever you ye hid!"  
 "But is it right! When I only gave  
 My hand to you in a sweat to save,  
 Through desperate need  
 (As I thought), my fame, for I was not brave!"  
 "To save your fame? Your meaning is dim,  
 For nobody knew of your altar-whim?"  
 "I mean — I feared  
 There might be fruit of my tie with him;  
 "And to cloak it by marriage I'm not the first,  
 Though, maybe, morally most accurst  
 Through your unpeered  
 And strict uprightness. That's the worst!

“While yesterday his worn contours  
Convinced me that love like his endures,  
And that my troth-plight  
Had been his, in fact, and not truly yours.”

“So, my lady, you raise the veil by degrees . . .  
I own this last is enough to freeze  
The warmest wight!

Now hear the other side, if you please:

“I did say once, though without intent,  
That marriage is a plain event  
Of black and white,  
Whatever may be its sentiment.

“I’ll act accordingly, none the less  
That you soiled the contract in time of stress,  
Thereto induced  
By the feared results of your wantonness.

“But the thing is over, and no one knows,  
And it’s nought to the future what you disclose.  
That you’ll be loosed  
For such an episode, don’t suppose!

“No: I’ll not free you. And if it appear  
There was too good ground for your first fear  
From your amorous tricks,  
I’ll father the child. Yes, by God, my dear.

“Even should you fly to his arms, I’ll damn  
Opinion, and fetch you; treat as sham  
Your mutinous kicks,  
And whip you home. That’s the sort I am!”

She whitened. “Enough . . . Since you disapprove  
I’ll yield in silence, and never move  
Till my last pulse ticks  
A footstep from the domestic groove.”

“Then swear it,” he said, “and your king uncrown.”  
He drew her forth in her long white gown,  
And she knelt and swore.

“Good. Now you may go and again lie down

“Since you’ve played these pranks and given no sign,  
You shall crave this man of yours; pine and pine  
With sighings sore,  
‘Till I’ve starved your love for him; nailed you mine.

“I’m a practical man, and want no tears;  
You’ve made a fool of me, it appears;  
That you don’t again  
Is a lesson I’ll teach you in future years.”

She answered not, but lay listlessly  
With her dark dry eyes on the coppery sea,  
That now and then  
Flung its lazy founce at the neighbouring quay.

1910

## **A KING’S SOLILOQUY ON THE NIGHT OF HIS FUNERAL**

From the slow march and muffled drum  
And crowds distrest,  
And book and bell, at length I have come  
To my full rest.

A ten years’ rule beneath the sun  
Is wound up here,  
And what I have done, what left undone,  
Figures out clear.

Yet in the estimate of such  
It grieves me more  
That I by some was loved so much  
Than that I bore,

From others, judgment of that hue  
Which over-hope  
Breeds from a theoretic view  
Of regal scope.

For kingly opportunities  
Right many have sighed;  
How best to bear its devilries  
Those learn who have tried!

I have eaten the fat and drunk the sweet,  
Lived the life out  
From the first greeting glad drum-beat  
To the last shout.

What pleasure earth affords to kings  
I have enjoyed  
Through its long vivid pulse-stirrings  
Even till it cloyed.

What days of drudgery, nights of stress  
Can cark a throne,  
Even one maintained in peacefulness,  
I too have known.

And so, I think, could I step back  
To life again,  
I should prefer the average track  
Of average men,  
Since, as with them, what kingship would  
It cannot do,  
Nor to first thoughts however good  
Hold itself true.

Something binds hard the royal hand,  
As all that be,  
And it is That has shaped, has planned  
My acts and me.

May 1910.

## THE CORONATION

At Westminster, hid from the light of day,  
Many who once had shone as monarchs lay.

Edward the Pious, and two Edwards more,  
The second Richard, Henrys three or four;

That is to say, those who were called the Third,  
Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth (the much self-widowed),

And James the Scot, and near him Charles the Second,  
And, too, the second George could there be reckoned.

Of women, Mary and Queen Elizabeth,  
And Anne, all silent in a musing death;

And William's Mary, and Mary, Queen of Scots,  
And consort-queens whose names oblivion blots;

And several more whose chronicle one sees  
Adorning ancient royal pedigrees.

- Now, as they drowsed on, freed from Life's old thrall,  
And heedless, save of things exceptional,

Said one: "What means this throbbing thudding sound  
That reaches to us here from overground;  
"A sound of chisels, augers, planes, and saws,  
Infringing all ecclesiastic laws?  
"And these tons-weight of timber on us pressed,  
Unfelt here since we entered into rest?  
"Surely, at least to us, being corpses royal,  
A meet repose is owing by the loyal?"  
" — Perhaps a scaffold!" Mary Stuart sighed,  
"If such still be. It was that way I died."  
" — Ods! Far more like," said he the many-wived,  
"That for a wedding 'tis this work's contrived.  
"Ha-ha! I never would bow down to Rimmon,  
But I had a rare time with those six women!"  
"Not all at once?" gasped he who loved confession.  
"Nay, nay!" said Hal. "That would have been transgression."  
" — They build a catafalque here, black and tall,  
Perhaps," mused Richard, "for some funeral?"  
And Anne chimed in: "Ah, yes: it maybe so!"  
"Nay!" squeaked Eliza. "Little you seem to know -  
"Clearly 'tis for some crowning here in state,  
As they crowned us at our long bygone date;  
"Though we'd no such a power of carpentry,  
But let the ancient architecture be;  
"If I were up there where the parsons sit,  
In one of my gold robes, I'd see to it!"  
"But you are not," Charles chuckled. "You are here,  
And never will know the sun again, my dear!"  
"Yea," whispered those whom no one had addressed;  
"With slow, sad march, amid a folk distressed,  
We were brought here, to take our dusty rest.  
"And here, alas, in darkness laid below,  
We'll wait and listen, and endure the show . . .  
Clamour dogs kingship; afterwards not so!"

1911



## AQUAE SULIS

The chimes called midnight, just at interlune,  
And the daytime talk of the Roman investigations  
Was checked by silence, save for the husky tune  
The bubbling waters played near the excavations.

And a warm air came up from underground,  
And a flutter, as of a filmy shape unsepulchred,  
That collected itself, and waited, and looked around:  
Nothing was seen, but utterances could be heard:

Those of the goddess whose shrine was beneath the pile  
Of the God with the baldachined altar overhead:  
“And what did you get by raising this nave and aisle  
Close on the site of the temple I tenanted?”

“The notes of your organ have thrilled down out of view  
To the earth-clogged wrecks of my edifice many a year,  
Though stately and shining once — ay, long ere you  
Had set up crucifix and candle here.

“Your priests have trampled the dust of mine without rueing,  
Despising the joys of man whom I so much loved,  
Though my springs boil on by your Gothic arcades and pewing,  
And sculptures crude . . . Would Jove they could be removed!”

“ — Repress, O lady proud, your traditional ires;  
You know not by what a frail thread we equally hang;  
It is said we are images both — twitched by people’s desires;  
And that I, like you, fail as a song men yesterday sang!”

\* \*

And the olden dark hid the cavities late laid bare,  
And all was suspended and soundless as before,  
Except for a gossamery noise fading off in the air,  
And the boiling voice of the waters' medicinal pour.

BATH.

## SEVENTY-FOUR AND TWENTY

Here goes a man of seventy-four,  
Who sees not what life means for him,  
And here another in years a score  
Who reads its very figure and trim.

The one who shall walk to-day with me  
Is not the youth who gazes far,  
But the breezy wight who cannot see  
What Earth's ingrained conditions are.

## THE ELOPEMENT

"A woman never agreed to it!" said my knowing friend to me.  
"That one thing she'd refuse to do for Solomon's mines in fee:  
No woman ever will make herself look older than she is."  
I did not answer; but I thought, "you err there, ancient Quiz."

It took a rare one, true, to do it; for she was surely rare -  
As rare a soul at that sweet time of her life as she was fair.  
And urging motives, too, were strong, for ours was a passionate  
case,  
Yea, passionate enough to lead to freaking with that young face.

I have told no one about it, should perhaps make few believe,  
But I think it over now that life looms dull and years bereave,  
How blank we stood at our bright wits' end, two frail barks in  
distress,  
How self-regard in her was slain by her large tenderness.

I said: "The only chance for us in a crisis of this kind  
Is going it thorough!" — "Yes," she calmly breathed. "Well, I don't  
mind."

And we blanched her dark locks ruthlessly: set wrinkles on her  
brow;  
Ay — she was a right rare woman then, whatever she may be now.

That night we heard a coach drive up, and questions asked below.  
“A gent with an elderly wife, sir,” was returned from the bureau.  
And the wheels went rattling on, and free at last from public ken  
We washed all off in her chamber and restored her youth again.

How many years ago it was! Some fifty can it be  
Since that adventure held us, and she played old wife to me?  
But in time convention won her, as it wins all women at last,  
And now she is rich and respectable, and time has buried the past.

## I ROSE UP AS MY CUSTOM IS

I rose up as my custom is  
On the eve of All-Souls' day,  
And left my grave for an hour or so  
To call on those I used to know  
Before I passed away.

I visited my former Love  
As she lay by her husband's side;  
I asked her if life pleased her, now  
She was rid of a poet wrung in brow,  
And crazed with the ills he eyed;

Who used to drag her here and there  
Wherever his fancies led,  
And point out pale phantasmal things,  
And talk of vain vague purposings  
That she discredited.

She was quite civil, and replied,  
"Old comrade, is that you?  
Well, on the whole, I like my life. -  
I know I swore I'd be no wife,  
But what was I to do?"

"You see, of all men for my sex  
A poet is the worst;  
Women are practical, and they  
Crave the wherewith to pay their way,  
And slake their social thirst.

"You were a poet — quite the ideal  
That we all love awhile:  
But look at this man snoring here -  
He's no romantic chanticler,  
Yet keeps me in good style.

“He makes no quest into my thoughts,  
But a poet wants to know  
What one has felt from earliest days,  
Why one thought not in other ways,  
And one’s Loves of long ago.”

Her words benumbed my fond frail ghost;  
The nightmares neighed from their stalls  
The vampires screeched, the harpies flew,  
And under the dim dawn I withdrew  
To Death’s inviolate halls.

## **A WEEK**

On Monday night I closed my door,  
And thought you were not as heretofore,  
And little cared if we met no more.

I seemed on Tuesday night to trace  
Something beyond mere commonplace  
In your ideas, and heart, and face.

On Wednesday I did not opine  
Your life would ever be one with mine,  
Though if it were we should well combine.

On Thursday noon I liked you well,  
And fondly felt that we must dwell  
Not far apart, whatever befell.

On Friday it was with a thrill  
In gazing towards your distant vill  
I owned you were my dear one still.

I saw you wholly to my mind  
On Saturday — even one who shrined  
All that was best of womankind.

As wing-clipt sea-gull for the sea  
On Sunday night I longed for thee,  
Without whom life were waste to me!

## HAD YOU WEPT

Had you wept; had you but neared me with a frail uncertain ray,  
Dewy as the face of the dawn, in your large and luminous eye,  
Then would have come back all the joys the tidings had slain that  
day,  
And a new beginning, a fresh fair heaven, have smoothed the things  
awry.  
But you were less feebly human, and no passionate need for clinging  
Possessed your soul to overthrow reserve when I came near;  
Ay, though you suffer as much as I from storms the hours are  
bringing  
Upon your heart and mine, I never see you shed a tear.

The deep strong woman is weakest, the weak one is the strong;  
The weapon of all weapons best for winning, you have not used;  
Have you never been able, or would you not, through the evil times  
and long?  
Has not the gift been given you, or such gift have you refused?  
When I bade me not absolve you on that evening or the morrow,  
Why did you not make war on me with those who weep like rain?  
You felt too much, so gained no balm for all your torrid sorrow,  
And hence our deep division, and our dark undying pain.

## BEREFT, SHE THINKS SHE DREAMS

I dream that the dearest I ever knew  
Has died and been entombed.  
I am sure it's a dream that cannot be true,  
But I am so overgloomed  
By its persistence, that I would gladly  
Have quick death take me,  
Rather than longer think thus sadly;  
So wake me, wake me!  
It has lasted days, but minute and hour  
I expect to get aroused  
And find him as usual in the bower  
Where we so happily housed.  
Yet stays this nightmare too appalling,  
And like a web shakes me,  
And piteously I keep on calling,  
And no one wakes me!

## IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

“What do you see in that time-touched stone,  
When nothing is there  
But ashen blankness, although you give it  
A rigid stare?

“You look not quite as if you saw,  
But as if you heard,  
Parting your lips, and treading softly  
As mouse or bird.

“It is only the base of a pillar, they’ll tell you,  
That came to us  
From a far old hill men used to name  
Areopagus.”

- “I know no art, and I only view  
A stone from a wall,  
But I am thinking that stone has echoed  
The voice of Paul,

“Paul as he stood and preached beside it  
Facing the crowd,  
A small gaunt figure with wasted features,  
Calling out loud

“Words that in all their intimate accents  
Pattered upon  
That marble front, and were far reflected,  
And then were gone.

“I’m a labouring man, and know but little,  
Or nothing at all;  
But I can’t help thinking that stone once echoed  
The voice of Paul.”

## IN THE SERVANTS’ QUARTERS

“Man, you too, aren’t you, one of these rough followers of the  
criminal?

All hanging hereabout to gather how he’s going to bear  
Examination in the hall.” She flung disdainful glances on  
The shabby figure standing at the fire with others there,  
Who warmed them by its flare.

“No indeed, my skipping maiden: I know nothing of the trial here,  
Or criminal, if so he be. — I chanced to come this way,  
And the fire shone out into the dawn, and morning airs are cold now;  
I, too, was drawn in part by charms I see before me play,  
That I see not every day.”

“Ha, ha!” then laughed the constables who also stood to warm  
themselves,  
The while another maiden scrutinized his features hard,  
As the blaze threw into contrast every line and knot that wrinkled  
them,

Exclaiming, “Why, last night when he was brought in by the guard,  
You were with him in the yard!”

“Nay, nay, you teasing wench, I say! You know you speak mistakenly.  
Cannot a tired pedestrian who has footed it afar  
Here on his way from northern parts, engrossed in humble marketings,  
Come in and rest awhile, although judicial doings are  
Afoot by morning star?”

“O, come, come!” laughed the constables. “Why, man, you speak the  
dialect

He uses in his answers; you can hear him up the stairs.  
So own it. We sha’n’t hurt ye. There he’s speaking now! His  
syllables

Are those you sound yourself when you are talking unawares,  
As this pretty girl declares.”

“And you shudder when his chain clinks!” she rejoined. “O yes, I  
noticed it.

And you winced, too, when those cuffs they gave him echoed to us  
here.

They’ll soon be coming down, and you may then have to defend  
yourself

Unless you hold your tongue, or go away and keep you clear  
When he’s led to judgment near!”

“No! I’ll be damned in hell if I know anything about the man!  
No single thing about him more than everybody knows!  
Must not I even warm my hands but I am charged with blasphemies?” .

. .

- His face convulses as the morning cock that moment crows,  
And he stops, and turns, and goes.



## THE OBLITERATE TOMB

"More than half my life long  
Did they weigh me falsely, to my bitter wrong,  
But they all have shrunk away into the silence  
Like a lost song.

"And the day has dawned and come  
For forgiveness, when the past may hold it dumb  
On the once reverberate words of hatred uttered  
Half in delirium . . .

"With folded lips and hands  
They lie and wait what next the Will commands,  
And doubtless think, if think they can: 'Let discord  
Sink with Life's sands!'

"By these late years their names,  
Their virtues, their hereditary claims,  
May be as near defacement at their grave-place  
As are their fames."

— Such thoughts bechanced to seize  
A traveller's mind — a man of memories -  
As he set foot within the western city  
Where had died these

Who in their lifetime deemed  
Him their chief enemy — one whose brain had schemed  
To get their dingy greatness deeper dingied  
And disesteemed.

So, sojourning in their town,  
He mused on them and on their once renown,  
And said, "I'll seek their resting-place to-morrow  
Ere I lie down,

"And end, lest I forget,  
Those ires of many years that I regret,  
Renew their names, that men may see some liegeness  
Is left them yet."

Duly next day he went  
And sought the church he had known them to frequent,  
And wandered in the precincts, set on eyeing  
Where they lay pent,

Till by remembrance led  
He stood at length beside their slighted bed,  
Above which, truly, scarce a line or letter  
Could now be read.

”Thus years obliterate  
Their graven worth, their chronicle, their date!  
At once I’ll garnish and revive the record  
Of their past state,

”That still the sage may say  
In pensive progress here where they decay,  
‘This stone records a luminous line whose talents  
Told in their day.’“

While speaking thus he turned,  
For a form shadowed where they lay inurned,  
And he beheld a stranger in foreign vesture,  
And tropic-burned.

”Sir, I am right pleased to view  
That ancestors of mine should interest you,  
For I have come of purpose here to trace them . . .  
They are time-worn, true,

”But that’s a fault, at most,  
Sculptors can cure. On the Pacific coast  
I have vowed for long that relics of my forbears  
I’d trace ere lost,

”And hitherward I come,  
Before this same old Time shall strike me numb,  
To carry it out.” — ”Strange, this is!” said the other;  
”What mind shall plumb

”Coincident design!  
Though these my father’s enemies were and mine,  
I nourished a like purpose — to restore them  
Each letter and line.”

”Such magnanimity  
Is now not needed, sir; for you will see  
That since I am here, a thing like this is, plainly,  
Best done by me.”

The other bowed, and left,  
Crestfallen in sentiment, as one bereft  
Of some fair object he had been moved to cherish,  
By hands more deft.

And as he slept that night  
The phantoms of the ensepulchred stood up-right  
Before him, trembling that he had set him seeking  
Their charnel-site.

And, as unknowing his ruth,  
Asked as with terrors founded not on truth  
Why he should want them. "Ha," they hollowly hacked,  
"You come, forsooth,

"By stealth to obliterate  
Our graven worth, our chronicle, our date,  
That our descendant may not gild the record  
Of our past state,

"And that no sage may say  
In pensive progress near where we decay:  
'This stone records a luminous line whose talents  
Told in their day.'"

Upon the morrow he went  
And to that town and churchyard never bent  
His ageing footsteps till, some twelvemonths onward,  
An accident

Once more detained him there;  
And, stirred by hauntings, he must needs repair  
To where the tomb was. Lo, it stood still wasting  
In no man's care.

"The travelled man you met  
The last time," said the sexton, "has not yet  
Appeared again, though wealth he had in plenty.  
— Can he forget?

"The architect was hired  
And came here on smart summons as desired,  
But never the descendant came to tell him  
What he required."

And so the tomb remained  
Untouched, untended, crumbling, weather-stained,  
And though the one-time foe was fain to right it  
He still refrained.

"I'll set about it when  
I am sure he'll come no more. Best wait till then."  
But so it was that never the stranger entered  
That city again.

And the well-meaner died  
While waiting tremulously unsatisfied  
That no return of the family's foreign scion  
Would still betide.

And many years slid by,  
And active church-restorers cast their eye  
Upon the ancient garth and hoary building  
The tomb stood nigh.

And when they had scraped each wall,  
Pulled out the stately pews, and smartened all,  
“It will be well,” declared the spruce church-warden,  
”To overhaul

”And broaden this path where shown;  
Nothing prevents it but an old tombstone  
Pertaining to a family forgotten,  
Of deeds unknown.

”Their names can scarce be read,  
Depend on’t, all who care for them are dead.”  
So went the tomb, whose shards were as path-paving  
Distributed.

Over it and about  
Men’s footsteps beat, and wind and water-spout,  
Until the names, aforetime gnawed by weathers,  
Were quite worn out.

So that no sage can say  
In pensive progress near where they decay,  
“This stone records a luminous line whose talents  
Told in their day.”

## **REGRET NOT ME**

Regret not me;  
Beneath the sunny tree  
I lie uncaring, slumbering peacefully.

Swift as the light  
I flew my faery flight;  
Ecstatically I moved, and feared no night.

I did not know  
That heydays fade and go,  
But deemed that what was would be always so.

I skipped at morn  
Between the yellowing corn,  
Thinking it good and glorious to be born.

I ran at eves  
Among the piled-up sheaves,  
Dreaming, "I grieve not, therefore nothing grieves."  
Now soon will come  
The apple, pear, and plum  
And hinds will sing, and autumn insects hum.  
Again you will fare  
To cider-makings rare,  
And junketings; but I shall not be there.  
Yet gaily sing  
Until the pewter ring  
Those songs we sang when we went gipsying.  
And lightly dance  
Some triple-timed romance  
In coupled figures, and forget mischance;  
And mourn not me  
Beneath the yellowing tree;  
For I shall mind not, slumbering peacefully.

## THE RECALCITRANTS

Let us off and search, and find a place  
Where yours and mine can be natural lives,  
Where no one comes who dissects and dives  
And proclaims that ours is a curious case,  
That its touch of romance can scarcely grace.  
You would think it strange at first, but then  
Everything has been strange in its time.  
When some one said on a day of the prime  
He would bow to no brazen god again  
He doubtless dazed the mass of men.  
None will recognize us as a pair whose claims  
To righteous judgment we care not making;  
Who have doubted if breath be worth the taking,  
And have no respect for the current fames  
Whence the savour has flown while abide the names.  
We have found us already shunned, disdained,  
And for re-acceptance have not once striven;  
Whatever offence our course has given  
The brunt thereof we have long sustained.  
Well, let us away, scorned unexplained.

## STARLINGS ON THE ROOF

“No smoke spreads out of this chimney-pot,  
The people who lived here have left the spot,  
And others are coming who knew them not.

If you listen anon, with an ear intent,  
The voices, you’ll find, will be different  
From the well-known ones of those who went.”

“Why did they go? Their tones so bland  
Were quite familiar to our band;  
The comers we shall not understand.”

“They look for a new life, rich and strange;  
They do not know that, let them range  
Wherever they may, they will get no change.

“They will drag their house-gear ever so far  
In their search for a home no miseries mar;  
They will find that as they were they are,

“That every hearth has a ghost, alack,  
And can be but the scene of a bivouac  
Till they move perforce — no time to pack!”

## THE MOON LOOKS IN

### I

I have risen again,  
And awhile survey  
By my chilly ray  
Through your window-pane  
Your upturned face,  
As you think, “Ah-she  
Now dreams of me  
In her distant place!”

## II

I pierce her blind  
In her far-off home:  
She fixes a comb,  
And says in her mind,  
“I start in an hour;  
Whom shall I meet?  
Won’t the men be sweet,  
And the women sour!”

## THE SWEET HUSSY

In his early days he was quite surprised  
When she told him she was compromised  
By meetings and lingerings at his whim,  
And thinking not of herself but him;  
While she lifted orbs aggrieved and round  
That scandal should so soon abound,  
(As she had raised them to nine or ten  
Of antecedent nice young men)  
And in remorse he thought with a sigh,  
How good she is, and how bad am I! -  
It was years before he understood  
That she was the wicked one — he the good.

## THE TELEGRAM

“O he’s suffering — maybe dying — and I not there to aid,  
And smooth his bed and whisper to him! Can I nohow go?  
Only the nurse’s brief twelve words thus hurriedly conveyed,  
As by stealth, to let me know.

“He was the best and brightest! — candour shone upon his brow,  
And I shall never meet again a soldier such as he,  
And I loved him ere I knew it, and perhaps he’s sinking now,  
Far, far removed from me!”

- The yachts ride mute at anchor and the fulling moon is fair,  
And the giddy folk are strutting up and down the smooth parade,  
And in her wild distraction she seems not to be aware  
That she lives no more a maid,

But has vowed and wived herself to one who blessed the ground she  
trod  
To and from his scene of ministry, and thought her history known  
In its last particular to him — aye, almost as to God,  
And believed her quite his own.

So great her absentmindedness she droops as in a swoon,  
And a movement of aversion mars her recent spousal grace,  
And in silence we two sit here in our waning honeymoon  
At this idle watering-place . . .

What now I see before me is a long lane overhung  
With lovelessness, and stretching from the present to the grave.  
And I would I were away from this, with friends I knew when young,  
Ere a woman held me slave.

## THE MOTH-SIGNAL

(On Egdon Heath)

“What are you still, still thinking,”  
He asked in vague surmise,  
“That stare at the wick unblinking  
With those great lost luminous eyes?”

“O, I see a poor moth burning  
In the candle-flame,” said she,  
Its wings and legs are turning  
To a cinder rapidly.”

“Moths fly in from the heather,”  
He said, “now the days decline.”  
“I know,” said she. “The weather,  
I hope, will at last be fine.

“I think,” she added lightly,  
”I’ll look out at the door.  
The ring the moon wears nightly  
May be visible now no more.”

She rose, and, little heeding,  
Her husband then went on  
With his attentive reading  
In the annals of ages gone.

Outside the house a figure  
Came from the tumulus near,  
And speedily waxed bigger,  
And clasped and called her Dear.



“I saw the pale-winged token  
You sent through the crack,” sighed she.  
“That moth is burnt and broken  
With which you lured out me.

“And were I as the moth is  
It might be better far  
For one whose marriage troth is  
Shattered as potsherds are!”

Then grinned the Ancient Briton  
From the tumulus treed with pine:  
“So, hearts are thwartly smitten  
In these days as in mine!”

## SEEN BY THE WAITS

Through snowy woods and shady  
We went to play a tune  
To the lonely manor-lady  
By the light of the Christmas moon.

We violed till, upward glancing  
To where a mirror leaned,  
We saw her airily dancing,  
Deeming her movements screened;  
Dancing alone in the room there,  
Thin-draped in her robe of night;  
Her postures, glassed in the gloom there,  
Were a strange phantasmal sight.

She had learnt (we heard when homing)  
That her roving spouse was dead;  
Why she had danced in the gloaming  
We thought, but never said.

## THE TWO SOLDIERS

Just at the corner of the wall  
We met — yes, he and I -  
Who had not faced in camp or hall  
Since we bade home good-bye,  
And what once happened came back — all -  
Out of those years gone by.

And that strange woman whom we knew  
And loved — long dead and gone,  
Whose poor half-perished residue,  
Tombless and trod, lay yon!  
But at this moment to our view  
Rose like a phantom wan.

And in his fixed face I could see,  
Lit by a lurid shine,  
The drama re-enact which she  
Had dyed incarnadine  
For us, and more. And doubtless he  
Beheld it too in mine.

A start, as at one slightly known,  
And with an indifferent air  
We passed, without a sign being shown  
That, as it real were,  
A memory-acted scene had thrown  
Its tragic shadow there.

## **THE DEATH OF REGRET**

I opened my shutter at sunrise,  
And looked at the hill hard by,  
And I heartily grieved for the comrade  
Who wandered up there to die.

I let in the morn on the morrow,  
And failed not to think of him then,  
As he trod up that rise in the twilight,  
And never came down again.

I undid the shutter a week thence,  
But not until after I'd turned  
Did I call back his last departure  
By the upland there discerned.

Uncovering the casement long later,  
I bent to my toil till the gray,  
When I said to myself, "Ah — what ails me,  
To forget him all the day!"

As daily I flung back the shutter  
In the same blank bald routine,  
He scarcely once rose to remembrance  
Through a month of my facing the scene.

And ah, seldom now do I ponder  
At the window as heretofore  
On the long valued one who died yonder,  
And wastes by the sycamore.

## IN THE DAYS OF CRINOLINE

A plain tilt-bonnet on her head  
She took the path across the leaze.  
- Her spouse the vicar, gardening, said,  
"Too dowdy that, for coquetries,  
So I can hoe at ease.

But when she had passed into the heath,  
And gained the wood beyond the flat,  
She raised her skirts, and from beneath  
Unpinned and drew as from a sheath  
An ostrich-feathered hat.

And where the hat had hung she now  
Concealed and pinned the dowdy hood,  
And set the hat upon her brow,  
And thus emerging from the wood  
Tripped on in jaunty mood.

The sun was low and crimson-faced  
As two came that way from the town,  
And plunged into the wood untraced . . .  
When separately therefrom they paced  
The sun had quite gone down.

The hat and feather disappeared,  
The dowdy hood again was donned,  
And in the gloom the fair one neared  
Her home and husband dour, who conned  
Calmly his blue-eyed blonde.

"To-day," he said, "you have shown good sense,  
A dress so modest and so meek  
Should always deck your goings hence  
Alone." And as a recompense  
He kissed her on the cheek.

## THE ROMAN GRAVEMOUNDS

By Rome's dim relics there walks a man,  
Eyes bent; and he carries a basket and spade;  
I guess what impels him to scrape and scan;  
Yea, his dreams of that Empire long decayed.

"Vast was Rome," he must muse, "in the world's regard,  
Vast it looms there still, vast it ever will be;"  
And he stoops as to dig and unmine some shard  
Left by those who are held in such memory.

But no; in his basket, see, he has brought  
A little white furred thing, stiff of limb,  
Whose life never won from the world a thought;  
It is this, and not Rome, that is moving him.

And to make it a grave he has come to the spot,  
And he delves in the ancient dead's long home;  
Their fames, their achievements, the man knows not;  
The furred thing is all to him — nothing Rome!

"Here say you that Caesar's warriors lie? -  
But my little white cat was my only friend!  
Could she but live, might the record die  
Of Caesar, his legions, his aims, his end!"

Well, Rome's long rule here is oft and again  
A theme for the sages of history,  
And the small furred life was worth no one's pen;  
Yet its mourner's mood has a charm for me.

November 1910.

## THE WORKBOX

"See, here's the workbox, little wife,  
That I made of polished oak."  
He was a joiner, of village life;  
She came of borough folk.

He holds the present up to her  
As with a smile she nears  
And answers to the profferer,  
"Twill last all my sewing years!"

“I warrant it will. And longer too.  
‘Tis a scantling that I got  
Off poor John Wayward’s coffin, who  
Died of they knew not what.

“The shingled pattern that seems to cease  
Against your box’s rim  
Continues right on in the piece  
That’s underground with him.

“And while I worked it made me think  
Of timber’s varied doom;  
One inch where people eat and drink,  
The next inch in a tomb.

“But why do you look so white, my dear,  
And turn aside your face?  
You knew not that good lad, I fear,  
Though he came from your native place?”

“How could I know that good young man,  
Though he came from my native town,  
When he must have left there earlier than  
I was a woman grown?”

“Ah no. I should have understood!  
It shocked you that I gave  
To you one end of a piece of wood  
Whose other is in a grave?”

“Don’t, dear, despise my intellect,  
Mere accidental things  
Of that sort never have effect  
On my imaginings.”

Yet still her lips were limp and wan,  
Her face still held aside,  
As if she had known not only John,  
But known of what he died.

## **THE SACRILEGE**

A BALLAD-TRAGEDY  
(Circa 182-)  
PART I

“I have a Love I love too well  
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor;  
I have a Love I love too well,  
To whom, ere she was mine,  
‘Such is my love for you,’ I said,  
‘That you shall have to hood your head  
A silken kerchief crimson-red,  
Wove finest of the fine.’

“And since this Love, for one mad moon,  
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor,  
Since this my Love for one mad moon  
Did clasp me as her king,  
I snatched a silk-piece red and rare  
From off a stall at Priddy Fair,  
For handkerchief to hood her hair  
When we went gallanting.

“Full soon the four weeks neared their end  
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor;  
And when the four weeks neared their end,  
And their swift sweets outwore,  
I said, ‘What shall I do to own  
Those beauties bright as tulips blown,  
And keep you here with me alone  
As mine for evermore?’

“And as she drowsed within my van  
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor -  
And as she drowsed within my van,  
And dawning turned to day,  
She heavily raised her sloe-black eyes  
And murmured back in softest wise,  
‘One more thing, and the charms you prize  
Are yours henceforth for aye.

““And swear I will I’ll never go  
While Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor  
To meet the Cornish Wrestler Joe  
For dance and dallyings.  
If you’ll to yon cathedral shrine,  
And finger from the chest divine  
Treasure to buy me ear-drops fine,  
And richly jewelled rings.’

“I said: ‘I am one who has gathered gear  
From Marlbury Downs to Dunkery Tor,  
Who has gathered gear for many a year  
From mansion, mart and fair;  
But at God’s house I’ve stayed my hand,  
Hearing within me some command -  
Curbed by a law not of the land  
From doing damage there.’

“Whereat she pouts, this Love of mine,  
As Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor,  
And still she pouts, this Love of mine,  
So cityward I go.  
But ere I start to do the thing,  
And speed my soul’s imperilling  
For one who is my ravishing  
And all the joy I know,

“I come to lay this charge on thee -  
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor -  
I come to lay this charge on thee  
With solemn speech and sign:  
Should things go ill, and my life pay  
For botchery in this rash assay,  
You are to take hers likewise — yea,  
The month the law takes mine.

“For should my rival, Wrestler Joe,  
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor -  
My reckless rival, Wrestler Joe,  
My Love’s possessor be,  
My tortured spirit would not rest,  
But wander weary and distressed  
Throughout the world in wild protest:  
The thought nigh maddens me!”

## PART II

Thus did he speak — this brother of mine -  
On Exon Wild by Dunkery Tor,  
Born at my birth of mother of mine,  
And forthwith went his way  
To dare the deed some coming night . . .  
I kept the watch with shaking sight,  
The moon at moments breaking bright,  
At others glooming gray.

For three full days I heard no sound  
Where Dunkery frowns on Exon Moor,  
I heard no sound at all around  
Whether his fay prevailed,  
Or one malign the master were,  
Till some afoot did tidings bear  
How that, for all his practised care,  
He had been caught and jailed.

They had heard a crash when twelve had chimed  
By Mendip east of Dunkery Tor,  
When twelve had chimed and moonlight climbed;  
They watched, and he was tracked  
By arch and aisle and saint and knight  
Of sculptured stonework sheeted white  
In the cathedral's ghostly light,  
And captured in the act.

Yes; for this Love he loved too well  
Where Dunkery sights the Severn shore,  
All for this Love he loved too well  
He burst the holy bars,  
Seized golden vessels from the chest  
To buy her ornaments of the best,  
At her ill-witchery's request  
And lure of eyes like stars . . .

When blustering March confused the sky  
In Toneborough Town by Exon Moor,  
When blustering March confused the sky  
They stretched him; and he died.  
Down in the crowd where I, to see  
The end of him, stood silently,  
With a set face he lipped to me -  
"Remember." "Ay!" I cried.

By night and day I shadowed her  
From Toneborough Deane to Dunkery Tor,  
I shadowed her asleep, astir,  
And yet I could not bear -  
Till Wrestler Joe anon began  
To figure as her chosen man,  
And took her to his shining van -  
To doom a form so fair!



He made it handsome for her sake -  
And Dunkery smiled to Exon Moor -  
He made it handsome for her sake,  
Painting it out and in;  
And on the door of apple-green  
A bright brass knocker soon was seen,  
And window-curtains white and clean  
For her to sit within.

And all could see she clave to him  
As cleaves a cloud to Dunkery Tor,  
Yea, all could see she clave to him,  
And every day I said,  
“A pity it seems to part those two  
That hourly grow to love more true:  
Yet she’s the wanton woman who  
Sent one to swing till dead!”

That blew to blazing all my hate,  
While Dunkery frowned on Exon Moor,  
And when the river swelled, her fate  
Came to her pitilessly . . .  
I dogged her, crying: “Across that plank  
They use as bridge to reach yon bank  
A coat and hat lie limp and dank;  
Your goodman’s, can they be?”

She paled, and went, I close behind -  
And Exon frowned to Dunkery Tor,  
She went, and I came up behind  
And tipped the plank that bore  
Her, fleetly flitting across to eye  
What such might bode. She slid awry;  
And from the current came a cry,  
A gurgle; and no more.

How that befell no mortal knew  
From Marlbury Downs to Exon Moor;  
No mortal knew that deed undue  
But he who schemed the crime,  
Which night still covers . . . But in dream  
Those ropes of hair upon the stream  
He sees, and he will hear that scream  
Until his judgment-time.

# THE ABBEY MASON

(Inventor of the “Perpendicular” Style of Gothic Architecture)

The new-vamped Abbey shaped apace  
In the fourteenth century of grace;

(The church which, at an after date,  
Acquired cathedral rank and state.)

Panel and circumscribing wall  
Of latest feature, trim and tall,

Rose roundabout the Norman core  
In prouder pose than theretofore,

Encasing magically the old  
With parpend ashlars manifold.

The trowels rang out, and tracery  
Appeared where blanks had used to be.

Men toiled for pleasure more than pay,  
And all went smoothly day by day,

Till, in due course, the transept part  
Engrossed the master-mason’s art.

- Home-coming thence he tossed and turned  
Throughout the night till the new sun burned.

“What fearful visions have inspired  
These gaingivings?” his wife inquired;

“As if your tools were in your hand  
You have hammered, fitted, muttered, planned;

“You have thumped as you were working hard:  
I might have found me bruised and scarred.

“What then’s amiss. What eating care  
Looms nigh, whereof I am unaware?”

He answered not, but churchward went,  
Viewing his draughts with discontent;

And fumbled there the livelong day  
Till, hollow-eyed, he came away.

- ‘Twas said, “The master-mason’s ill!”  
And all the abbey works stood still.

Quoth Abbot Wygmore: “Why, O why  
Distress yourself? You’ll surely die!”

The mason answered, trouble-torn,  
“This long-vogued style is quite outworn!

“The upper archmould nohow serves  
To meet the lower tracery curves:

“The ogees bend too far away  
To give the flexures interplay.

“This it is causes my distress . . .  
So it will ever be unless

“New forms be found to supersede  
The circle when occasions need.

“To carry it out I have tried and toiled,  
And now perforce must own me foiled!

“Jeerers will say: ‘Here was a man  
Who could not end what he began!’“

- So passed that day, the next, the next;  
The abbot scanned the task, perplexed;

The townsmen mustered all their wit  
To fathom how to compass it,  
But no raw artistries availed  
Where practice in the craft had failed . . .

- One night he tossed, all open-eyed,  
And early left his helpmeet’s side.

Scattering the rushes of the floor  
He wandered from the chamber door  
And sought the sizing pile, whereon  
Struck dimly a cadaverous dawn  
Through freezing rain, that drenched the board  
Of diagram-lines he last had scored -  
Chalked phantasies in vain begot  
To knife the architectural knot -  
In front of which he dully stood,  
Regarding them in hopeless mood.  
He closelier looked; then looked again:  
The chalk-scratched draught-board faced the rain,  
Whose iced drops deformed the lines  
Innumerable of his lame designs,  
So that they streamed in small white threads  
From the upper segments to the heads  
Of arcs below, uniting them  
Each by a stalactitic stem.

- At once, with eyes that struck out sparks,  
He adds accessory cusping-marks,

Then laughs aloud. The thing was done  
So long assayed from sun to sun . . .

- Now in his joy he grew aware  
Of one behind him standing there,

And, turning, saw the abbot, who  
The weather's whim was watching too.

Onward to Prime the abbot went,  
Tacit upon the incident.

- Men now discerned as days revolved  
The ogive riddle had been solved;

Templates were cut, fresh lines were chalked  
Where lines had been defaced and balked,

And the work swelled and mounted higher,  
Achievement distancing desire;

Here jambs with transoms fixed between,  
Where never the like before had been -

There little mullions thinly sawn  
Where meeting circles once were drawn.

"We knew," men said, "the thing would go  
After his craft-wit got aglow,

"And, once fulfilled what he has designed,  
We'll honour him and his great mind!"

When matters stood thus poised awhile,  
And all surroundings shed a smile,

The master-mason on an eve  
Homed to his wife and seemed to grieve . . .

- "The abbot spoke to me to-day:  
He hangs about the works alway.

"He knows the source as well as I  
Of the new style men magnify.

"He said: 'You pride yourself too much  
On your creation. Is it such?

"Surely the hand of God it is  
That conjured so, and only His! -

“Disclosing by the frost and rain  
Forms your invention chased in vain;

“Hence the devices deemed so great  
You copied, and did not create.’

“I feel the abbot’s words are just,  
And that all thanks renounce I must.

“Can a man welcome praise and pelf  
For hatching art that hatched itself? . . .

“So, I shall own the deft design  
Is Heaven’s outshaping, and not mine.”

“What!” said she. “Praise your works ensure  
To throw away, and quite obscure

“Your beaming and beneficent star?  
Better you leave things as they are!

“Why, think awhile. Had not your zest  
In your loved craft curtailed your rest -

“Had you not gone there ere the day  
The sun had melted all away!”

- But, though his good wife argued so,  
The mason let the people know

That not unaided sprang the thought  
Whereby the glorious fane was wrought,  
But that by frost when dawn was dim  
The method was disclosed to him.

“Yet,” said the townspeople thereat,  
“‘Tis your own doing, even with that!”

But he — chafed, childlike, in extremes -  
The temperament of men of dreams -

Aloofly scrupled to admit  
That he did aught but borrow it,

And diffidently made request  
That with the abbot all should rest.

- As none could doubt the abbot’s word,  
Or question what the church averred,

The mason was at length believed  
Of no more count than he conceived,  
And soon began to lose the fame  
That late had gathered round his name . . .

- Time passed, and like a living thing  
The pile went on embodying,

And workmen died, and young ones grew,  
And the old mason sank from view

And Abbots Wygmore and Staunton went  
And Horton sped the embellishment.

But not till years had far progressed  
Chanced it that, one day, much impressed,

Standing within the well-graced aisle,  
He asked who first conceived the style;

And some decrepit sage detailed  
How, when invention nought availed,

The cloud-cast waters in their whim  
Came down, and gave the hint to him

Who struck each arc, and made each mould;  
And how the abbot would not hold

As sole begetter him who applied  
Forms the Almighty sent as guide;

And how the master lost renown,  
And wore in death no artist's crown.

- Then Horton, who in inner thought  
Had more perceptions than he taught,

Replied: "Nay; art can but transmute;  
Invention is not absolute;

"Things fail to spring from nought at call,  
And art-beginnings most of all.

"He did but what all artists do,  
Wait upon Nature for his cue."

- "Had you been here to tell them so  
Lord Abbot, sixty years ago,

"The mason, now long underground,  
Doubtless a different fate had found.

"He passed into oblivion dim,  
And none knew what became of him!

"His name? 'Twas of some common kind  
And now has faded out of mind."

The Abbot: "It shall not be hid!  
I'll trace it." . . . But he never did.

- When longer yet dank death had wormed  
The brain wherein the style had germed

From Gloucester church it flew afar -  
The style called Perpendicular. -  
To Winton and to Westminster  
It ranged, and grew still beautifuller:  
From Solway Frith to Dover Strand  
Its fascinations starred the land,  
Not only on cathedral walls  
But upon courts and castle halls,  
Till every edifice in the isle  
Was patterned to no other style,  
And till, long having played its part,  
The curtain fell on Gothic art.

- Well: when in Wessex on your rounds,  
Take a brief step beyond its bounds,

And enter Gloucester: seek the quoin  
Where choir and transept interjoin,  
And, gazing at the forms there flung  
Against the sky by one unsung -  
The ogee arches transom-topped,  
The tracery-stalks by spandrels stopped,  
Petrified lacework — lightly lined  
On ancient massiveness behind -  
Muse that some minds so modest be  
As to renounce fame's fairest fee,  
(Like him who crystallized on this spot  
His visionings, but lies forgot,  
And many a mediaeval one  
Whose symmetries salute the sun)  
While others boom a baseless claim,  
And upon nothing rear a name.

## THE JUBILEE OF A MAGAZINE

(To the Editor)

Yes; your up-dated modern page -  
All flower-fresh, as it appears -  
Can claim a time-tried lineage,

That reaches backward fifty years  
(Which, if but short for sleepy squires,  
Is much in magazines' careers).

- Here, on your cover, never tires  
The sower, reaper, thresher, while  
As through the seasons of our sires

Each wills to work in ancient style  
With seedlip, sickle, share and flail,  
Though modes have since moved many a mile!

The steel-roped plough now rips the vale,  
With cog and tooth the sheaves are won,  
Wired wheels drum out the wheat like hail;

But if we ask, what has been done  
To unify the mortal lot  
Since your bright leaves first saw the sun,

Beyond mechanic furtherance — what  
Advance can rightness, candour, claim?  
Truth bends abashed, and answers not.

Despite your volumes' gentle aim  
To straighten visions wry and wrong,  
Events jar onward much the same!

- Had custom tended to prolong,  
As on your golden page engrained,  
Old processes of blade and prong,

And best invention been retained  
For high crusades to lessen tears  
Throughout the race, the world had gained! . . .  
But too much, this, for fifty years.

## THE SATIN SHOES

“If ever I walk to church to wed,  
As other maidens use,  
And face the gathered eyes,” she said,  
”I’ll go in satin shoes!”

She was as fair as early day  
Shining on meads unmown,  
And her sweet syllables seemed to play  
Like flute-notes softly blown.



The time arrived when it was meet  
That she should be a bride;  
The satin shoes were on her feet,  
Her father was at her side.

They stood within the dairy door,  
And gazed across the green;  
The church loomed on the distant moor,  
But rain was thick between.

“The grass-path hardly can be stepped,  
The lane is like a pool!” -  
Her dream is shown to be inept,  
Her wish they overrule.

“To go forth shod in satin soft  
A coach would be required!”  
For thickest boots the shoes were doffed -  
Those shoes her soul desired . . .

All day the bride, as overborne,  
Was seen to brood apart,  
And that the shoes had not been worn  
Sat heavy on her heart.

From her wrecked dream, as months flew on,  
Her thought seemed not to range.  
What ails the wife?” they said anon,  
”That she should be so strange?” . . .

Ah — what coach comes with furtive glide -  
A coach of closed-up kind?  
It comes to fetch the last year’s bride,  
Who wanders in her mind.

She strove with them, and fearfully ran  
Stairward with one low scream:  
“Nay — coax her,” said the madhouse man,  
”With some old household theme.”

“If you will go, dear, you must fain  
Put on those shoes — the pair  
Meant for your marriage, which the rain  
Forbade you then to wear.”

She clapped her hands, flushed joyous hues;  
”O yes — I’ll up and ride  
If I am to wear my satin shoes  
And be a proper bride!”

Out then her little foot held she,  
As to depart with speed;  
The madhouse man smiled pleasantly  
To see the wile succeed.

She turned to him when all was done,  
And gave him her thin hand,  
Exclaiming like an enraptured one,  
"This time it will be grand!"

She mounted with a face elate,  
Shut was the carriage door;  
They drove her to the madhouse gate,  
And she was seen no more . . .

Yet she was fair as early day  
Shining on meads unmown,  
And her sweet syllables seemed to play  
Like flute-notes softly blown.

## **EXEUNT OMNES**

### **I**

Everybody else, then, going,  
And I still left where the fair was? . . .  
Much have I seen of neighbour loungers  
Making a lusty showing,  
Each now past all knowing.

### **II**

There is an air of blankness  
In the street and the littered spaces;  
Thoroughfare, steeple, bridge and highway  
Wizen themselves to lankness;  
Kennels dribble dankness.

### III

Folk all fade. And whither,  
As I wait alone where the fair was?  
Into the clammy and numbing night-fog  
Whence they entered hither.  
Soon do I follow thither!

June 2, 1913.

### A POET

Attentive eyes, fantastic heed,  
Assessing minds, he does not need,  
Nor urgent writs to sup or dine,  
Nor pledges in the roseate wine.

For loud acclaim he does not care  
By the august or rich or fair,  
Nor for smart pilgrims from afar,  
Curious on where his hauntings are.

But soon or later, when you hear  
That he has doffed this wrinkled gear,  
Some evening, at the first star-ray,  
Come to his graveside, pause and say:

“Whatever the message his to tell,  
Two bright-souled women loved him well.”  
Stand and say that amid the dim:  
It will be praise enough for him.

July 1914.

### POSTSCRIPT “MEN WHO MARCH AWAY” (SONG OF THE SOLDIERS)

What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
To hazards whence no tears can win us;  
What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away?

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,  
Friend with the musing eye,  
Who watch us stepping by  
With doubt and dolorous sigh?  
Can much pondering so hoodwink you!  
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,  
Friend with the musing eye?

Nay. We well see what we are doing,  
Though some may not see -  
Dalliers as they be -  
England's need are we;  
Her distress would leave us rueing:  
Nay. We well see what we are doing,  
Though some may not see!

In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just,  
And that braggarts must  
Surely bite the dust,  
Press we to the field ungrieving,  
In our heart of hearts believing  
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing gray,  
To hazards whence no tears can win us:  
Hence the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away.

September 5, 1914.

The Ted K Archive

A critique of his ideas & actions



Thomas Hardy  
The Poetry Collection of Thomas Hardy - Volume 2

[www.thetedkarchive.com](http://www.thetedkarchive.com)